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The PECULIAR SCHEME of the AN-
BURGHER-SECEDERS unmasked:

I N
A SERIES OF LETTERS
T O

Mr ADAM GIB Minister of the Gospel
at Edinburgh.

C O N T A I N I N G

Animadversions upon his Defence of certain Petitions
and Modes of Expression used by the Antiburgher
Seceding Ministers in public Prayers, published in the
Scots Magazine for April 1769.

W H E R E I N

Their infrequent Communicating,—their Mode of Covenanting,
—their Meaning of the Covenanted Reformation,—their Prin-
ciples on the head of the Civil Magistrate's Power in Church-
affairs, &c. are briefly considered, and set in a proper light.

To which are annexed,

Remarks on a Sermon of Mr GIB's relative to the Manner of
swearing the SECEDERS COVENANT.

B Y

ANDREW SCOTT Minister of the Gospel at Dundee.

*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the
Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
Exod. xx. 7.*

*My kingdom is not of this world, &c. John xviii. 36. 37.
Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Rom. xiv. 5.*

E D I N B U R G H:

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M D C C L X X.





A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE author thinks it not improper to acquaint the Public, that having published, in the Scots Magazine for January 1769, some thoughts and queries relating to certain petitions and expressions used by Antiburgher-Seceders in public prayers; — Mr Gib, who is well known to have the lead among that body, thought proper to insert, in that Magazine for April last, a defence of those peculiarities, distinguishing one of the petitions by the title of “a matter wholly religious,” and the others by that of “matters somewhat political.” It was obvious to every body, he supposes, that that gentleman either gave no answer at all to some of the most important queries, or that what he chose to say on the subject, consisted chiefly in artful evasions, glossing and colouring the matters in question. On this account, the author was for some time in suspense, whether he should take any notice of this performance. At last however, for reasons known to himself, he thought it necessary to canvass it somewhat minutely; and also, to add what occurred to him on the important subject of the distinction between the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdoms of this world. Accordingly the first fourteen letters were written several months ago; and, in case of their being ever published, were intended to be anonymous, as well as the essay which Mr Gib had pretended to answer. But of late some occurrences induced him to write an account of the differences between the aforementioned Seceders and him, in order to give a view of his difficulties with respect to the mode of covenanting practised among that society, and of the tyranny and injurious usage exercised toward him by their judicatories, on account of those difficulties, which were extorted from him by high clergy-authority. After that account, with the several papers annexed to it, were sent to the press, he began to think of publishing the letters to Mr Gib also. And though, upon revising them with that view, he discovered somewhat of a coincidence between the two papers, which could scarce be avoided, considering the identity and near affinity of some of the subjects treated in both; yet this did not appear so very considerable, as that the publication of any one of the treatises could fully answer the end of both. He apprehended the letters might be of at least some utility for further illustrating and vindicating some things of no small moment in the controversy between the Seceders and him, which were but just hinted at in the *Account*. He therefore resolved to publish both; only he saw *the likeness to be such*, that it was vain to think of concealing the author. And as he “knows no reason of prudence, fear, or shame,” (to use Mr Gib’s own words), for doing so, except what may arise from a consciousness of

the meanness of his composition, the natural timidity of a young pen, and new to its employ, and such-like considerations, he thought it proper to prefix his name.

HE has endeavoured to give a fair and just representation of the peculiar scheme of Seceders, extracted not from hearsay or scattered hints, but from their standard writings, such as the judicial Act and Testimony, Act for renewing the covenants, Answers to Mr Nairn, &c. and of the covenanted reformation, and laws of both church and state in the period between 1638 and 1650, in favour thereof, from the originals, which are expressly homologated and approved, without the least exception, in those performances. And he can safely say, that he is not conscious of having in the least wiredrawn or perverted these their declared principles.

ALTHOUGH the letters be addressed to Mr Gib, the matters in question, without all doubt, concern the whole body of Seceders, and certainly merit their attention as a common cause. As Mr Gib has evidently given up with some very material parts of their original plan, he hopes the ministers of that way will be as fair and honest with the generation, and particularly the many precious souls under their inspection, as freely to declare, if they be still adhering thereto, or not. If they still continue to stand on their first ground, viz. the covenant-bottom and covenanting period between 1638 and 1650; why should they seek to disguise or varnish it in a huddle of deceitful colours, as Mr Gib hath done; and not rather honestly avow it? Are they now ashamed fairly and publicly to maintain their principles in the face of the sun? — If otherwise, that is, if they have now dropt the solemn-league uniformity, and points necessarily connected therewith; let them come from behind the curtain, and, like men of honour, candidly and frankly acknowledge it before the world. 'Tis no disparagement to the best of men to own their mistakes, and endeavour to reclaim those that have been misled through their means. Above all things, let them proceed no further in making poor simple people swear to things, which Mr Gib (a higher authority with them than any that, perhaps, the author could name) calls “matters somewhat political,” and which are quite foreign to the nature of Christ’s kingdom, which is not of this world, but is heavenly and spiritual. He will be heartily sorry, if ever Mr Gib in particular again administer that covenant to his people, after the public renunciation he has made of some important matters therein contained or referred to. If he should, what must people think? And, pray, let him and his brethren consider, if one in a hundred of those that have hitherto joined in that work, has really done so in truth, judgment, and righteousness.

THE author begs leave to say, that he is not so attached to any of those sentiments wherein he now finds himself obliged to differ from his former friends, but that he will give all possible attention to whatever may be offered from the inspired writings against them: and if, by the force of scripture-arguments, (the only arguments he will concern

cern himself with), he be convinced of error, he shall readily acknowledge it: for he has no pretensions to infallibility, which the dogmatism of some people would seem to import their laying claim to.

THAT the reader may have a full view of the whole affair in controversy between Mr Gib and him, it was judged proper to prefix both the letters originally published in the Scots Magazine.

It remains to observe, that the 15th letter was very lately written, at the desire of a friend, who had access to peruse the preceding letters in the course of printing; and who was of opinion, that it was necessary to expose what Mr Gib has advanced, in a sermon, on the *manner* of covenanting, relative to the *Bond's* not importing a swearing to the historical facts reduplicated upon therein.

As to the merits of the cause in dispute, the author leaves every one to judge for himself, and decide as he pleases: only he begs that those who please to dip in this affair, will examine the matters in question by the rule of God's word, and determine according to that infallible standard.

IN fine, if in the whole, or any part of his dispute with the Seceders, either in the former pamphlet or this, he hath advanced any thing disagreeable to the revealed mind and will of God, or injurious to the interests of the kingdom of his dear Son; he earnestly begs of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it may be brought to nought, and the weakness of it laid open in such a manner as to prevent the reception or propagation of it for ever. But if he has advanced, however weakly, what, through the divine blessing, may have a tendency to clear up any point of scripture truth and duty;—any thing that may be calculated for stopping the progress of rash and implicit swearing by the name of God; for casting light upon the nature of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world, and the proper methods of furthering the same; for reviving or promoting that truly-primitive practice, a frequent commemoration of the Lord's death in the ordinance of the supper; for exposing unwarrantable terms of the Christian fellowship; for exciting the professors of religion to become more the disciples and servants of Jesus Christ, and less the disciples and servants of men, &c.;—he in like manner begs, that this cause may not suffer, either through his manifold *real* weaknesses and imperfections, or through infamy and reproaches, which human passion, resentment, and party-spirit, may cast upon him, in order to hinder its progress; and also, that, in due time, it may please the God of the spirits of all flesh to raise up persons, in all respects better qualified, for illustrating and enforcing a cause wherein both the glory of God and the good of men seem to be so much concerned. May the Lord himself plead the cause that truly is his own! and to his name be praise.

N. B. UPON

N. B. UPON a more careful reading of the foot-note at page 69. of his *Account*, he apprehended it requisite to give the following caution and explanation. After noticing a certain circumstance relative to some of the brethren, it is there added,—“ I shall leave it with themselves,” (that is, the four gentlemen above mentioned, viz. Mess. Wilson, Preston, Watson, and Bennet), “ to reconcile the part they acted on that occasion, with their continued preaching and praying up covenanting in its present form, their concurring in leading on poor weak people to swear that oath without any alteration, and voting censure on Mr Arthur and me,” &c. Now, whereas this might imply, that each of ~~these~~ four voted for the suspension; the author reckoned himself bound by the rules of candor and equity to declare, that he did not mean so to affirm of *one* of them, namely, Mr Watson, who, to the best of his remembrance, did not vote in the passing of that sentence at all, but was silent. Whether he voted in the deposition and excommunication or not, he cannot say; because he was neither present, nor had occasion to hear thereof.

Dundee, March 20.

1770.

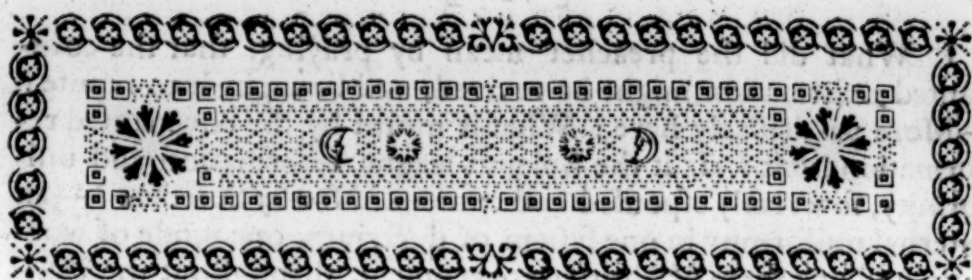


C O R R I G E N D A.

- p. 1.
- 3. 2. *for* chief *read* civil
- 7. *from the bottom, for* It is *read* Is it
- 90. 8. *for* and *read* an
- 106. 26. 27. *for* the above *read* a scriptural
- 124. 10. *for* pre-exercise *read* free exercise
- 11. *after* themselves *add* and acting

Thoughts





Thoughts and Queries relating to some Expressions
in Prayer, used by Antiburgher Seceders.

Originally published in the Scots Magazine for Ja-
nuary 1769.

To the Author of the SCOTS MAGAZINE.

S I R,

1768.

SOME time ago, I happened, on a Sabbath-day, to attend public worship in an Antiburgher Seceding meeting-house.—Although I be none of those people who set up for censurs and critics ; yet I could not help taking particular notice of certain petitions, and modes of expression, used by the preacher in prayer ; —such as, That the Lord would revive, and bring into repute, a covenanted work of reformation ; —That he would hasten the time when our civil magistrates should become nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church ; —That he would dispose them to exert their power and influence for promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ ; —That he would bless the ordinances both *more ordinary* and *more solemn*, &c. — which, or the like petitions and modes of expression, I understand, are not peculiar to that preacher only, but common to those of that way. Yea, such stress is said to be laid upon them, that the omission of them has, in sundry instances, given no small offence both to ministers and people.— Not having been fully satisfied, however, as to the determinate meaning and propriety of some, or all of these phrases, I was led to think more closely of them afterwards ; — when the following queries and thoughts occurred to my mind :—which I beg leave, through the channel of your Magazine, to communicate to the public ; and so much the rather as, perhaps, those whom they more immediately respect and concern, may be pleased to give candid, pertinent, and satisfactory answers,—in the same channel.

A

I. What

I. What did the preacher mean by praying, that the covenanted reformation might be revived, and brought into repute? —More particularly here: What is meant by the covenanted reformation itself? Is it the Solemn-league reformation and uniformity, so warmly espoused and contended for by Seceders? —an external uniformity in one system of doctrines, one mode of worship, and one form of church-government, throughout the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland,—to be brought about by the interposition of parliamentary power and civil pains, —without the least toleration or indulgence to such as might scruple at any part of said uniformity;—together with, it may be, the severe laws enacted by both the English and Scotch parliaments, especially the latter, in that period, for the promoting thereof;—and for the non-revival of which, the aforesaid loudly complain of, and testify against the revolution-parliament?—Supposing this to be the meaning, how hard would the fate of multitudes of our fellow-subjects at this day be, should that covenanted reformation and uniformity at any time come to be revived, — at least, by the British legislature? And, in all appearance, what a shocking scene of perjury and gross dissimulation would open? —Many would, no doubt, suffer for conscience sake:—and, to avoid suffering, or grasp at preferments, many more, it is to be feared, would offer violence to their consciences, and deal deceitfully in the most sacred matters; —as was plainly the case in the Solemn-league period.—Again, what is meant by said reformation's being brought into repute? If it is really believed to be the pure and unmixed cause of Christ, what great ground is there to expect its being brought into repute throughout whole nations and kingdoms of this world, and among the great men and politicians thereof? Is not the uncorrupted cause of Christ, for the most part, a despised cause in this world? And does not a faithful—stedfast adherence thereto rather expose persons to reproach and suffering, than raise them to honour and reputation, in the present state of things? Has not our Lord himself expressly taught, that whosoever will come after him, must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him? — follow him in a way of self-denial, and patient bearing of the cross? And does not his inspired apostle aver, that whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution? Is not the present state of the followers of the Lamb, in scripture represented as militant and suffering? — But how will such declarations and representations comport with his cause's being brought into repute among whole nations and kingdoms of this world as such?—although indeed, it always was, and ever will be highly in repute among the nations of them who are saved.

II. What



II. What was meant by praying, That the Lord would hasten the time when our chief rulers should become nursing fathers and mothers to the church ! — Does not this plainly suppose, that the powers which presently be in G. Britain, are not so ? — But some cannot help thinking otherwise, — since they, with a paternal sort of care, protect and nourish up their subjects, the members of the civil community, as a nursery from among whom members are gathered and called into the church and kingdom of Christ ; — not only defending them in the enjoyment of their civil properties in general, — but, in special, of that precious natural right of mankind, liberty of conscience, also. Whence it comes to pass, that the disciples of Christ, or church-members, in their dominions, are allowed to live quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty, — or, in other words, to profess and observe his holy religion, according to the best views thereof they can attain unto from the scriptures of truth, — without outward molestation and disturbance : — which certainly is no small ground of thankfulness ; — especially considering the furious and persecuting temper of some even of those who profess religion at this day, but seem not indeed to know what manner of spirit they are of ; — whose wild zeal, were it not for the restraint of our excellent civil government, would in all appearance prompt them on to violent measures with those who happen to differ from them in their views of religion. — Yea, this would seem to be all, or the principal advantage, that, in Paul's judgment, Christians were to expect from civil government ; see 1 Tim. ii. 1. 2. — How does the preacher understand the passage of the prophet, Is. xlix. 23. to which this petition seems to refer ? Does he understand it of the magistrate as such ministering food and nourishment unto the church of Christ as such ? Then, for information's sake, I would ask, what sort of nourishment it is the magistrate gives, or can give, unto the church ? Is it not earthly and carnal things only the rulers of the kingdoms of this world have in their power to give ? And is not the church of Christ a spiritual and heavenly sort of society, — which, agreeably to its nature and kind, is fed and nourished by spiritual provision ? For do not all the genuine members thereof eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink ? — But if the present British powers be not nursing-fathers to the church, it is asked, What would constitute them so ? It is incumbent upon them as nurse-fathers, to protect church-members from outward violence in the exercise of their religion ? This they do to all who behave themselves as good and peaceable subjects of the civil state, — which indeed the religion of Jesus strictly binds all its professors unto. — Is it further incumbent upon them as such, to provide for the maintenance of the ministers of the church ?

This also is done with regard to those of the national churches of England and Scotland, as presently by law established. — But, may some say, the legal benefices, thus disposed of, are misapplied; — they ought to be annexed unto the Secession-scheme, and bestowed upon the ministers of that way only. Well, supposing that should ever come to be the case, which indeed is not likely, would not those of the present established churches think they had as good ground to complain of misapplication on this head, as those of the Secession can possibly pretend? So that complaints of this kind, from some quarter or other, would not be got prevented. — Civil rulers, I suppose, for the most part, have political views in annexing worldly emoluments unto any scheme of religion or set of clergy whatever; and therefore will, no doubt, bestow their favours of that sort upon those who, they think, will best serve their political purposes. And I doubt not but the clergy of the establishment are fully as well qualified for serving the purposes of civil government, as those of the Secession would be; — although at the same time, in charity I hope, many on the establishment have much higher purposes in view, and at heart. — I shall not meddle with the warrantableness of the civil government's paying ministers stipends. As the bestowing of worldly emoluments upon such clergy as offer fairest for having the most extensive influence on the body of the people, seems to be a very good engine of state, I doubt not but politicians, and political rulers, will take care that this be done. — But yet, I cannot help asking on this head, If the voluntary contributions of church-members, according to their several abilities, for the maintenance of their pastors, be not fully as agreeable to the primitive and apostolic way, and as well calculated for answering the ends of edification in the church, — as that of a legal benefice, or national tax? True indeed, in the latter way, the clergy's living is usually more liberal, and they better enabled to carry out the port of gentry. But it remains a question, If that has a direct tendency to the spiritual nourishment, edification, and comfort of the church of Christ? for is it not a certain fact, confirmed by the mournful experience of past ages, that the raising of the church's ministers unto worldly grandeur and opulence, or even unto an entire independence upon the Christian people for their subsistence, and making them wholly dependent upon the civil powers therefor, — instead of turning out unto the welfare of the church, has, in too many instances, had a quite contrary effect? — Or, over and above all this, in order to our rulers being right nurse-fathers of the church, would it also be necessary to impose the Secession-scheme, as stated and laid out in the judicial testimony, and sworn unto

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in the bond reduplicating upon the long historical narrative in the acknowledgment of sins thereto prefixed, upon all his Majesty's subjects, of whatsoever quality, rank, and degree, under all civil pains? and forcibly to suppress, or root out of their lands and empire, all those the ministers of the Secession might think proper to adjudge Heretics, Sectarians, Latitudinarians, &c. &c.? But then, how would such measures consist with the peace and welfare of the civil community, the rights of conscience, the nature and genius of the religion and kingdom of Christ, and the divinely-authorised ways and methods of promoting it in the world?—But more to this purpose just now. — Wherefore,

III. What is meant by praying, That the Lord would dispose our rulers to exert their power for advancing the cause and kingdom of Christ? Can they, as civil rulers, use any other but carnal weapons, carnal power and policy, or temporal rewards and punishments, for this end? such as, on the one hand, the offices and riches of the state or worldly kingdom, by way of motives and attractives; and, on the other hand, civil pains or temporal evils, either of the greater or lesser sort, to be inflicted on those who will not submit themselves? — But, pray, what aptitude or fitness is there in the motives and engines of this world, for promoting and enforcing a kingdom which, by the glorious King thereof, is expressly declared not to be of this world? Does our Lord hire and engage people into his kingdom and service with hundreds and thousands a-year; with the emoluments, honours, and preferments, of an earthly kingdom? Does not the doctrine of Christ rather constantly and uniformly lead off the minds and attention of his disciples and followers from a present world, and the things thereof, unto another world, — a better, that is, an heavenly country, where their vast inheritance lies? Does it not direct them to look at, and be influenced by, not the things which are seen, and are temporal, but the things which are not seen, and are eternal? How then can it be believed, that ever he intended those things to be proposed as motives and incitements, for men to embrace and profess his heavenly religion? True indeed, in the gospel, he proposes the noblest, the most exalted, and engaging inducements, to come over to his side, and submit to his benign government, his rule of grace. But then are not these of a spiritual and heavenly nature?—even all spiritual blessings, — all the blessings of grace and glory in Christ Jesus? — And then, on the other hand, as to civil pains or temporal evils, whether of the greater or lesser sort, is there not good ground for saying, Far hence be all such methods of violence from the cause and kingdom

kingdom of the Prince of Peace, who is not come to destroy mens lives, or injure them in their civil concerns, but to save them? All methods of violence are diametrically opposite to the spirit and genius of the gospel of peace; and therefore methods of Christian persuasion only can be admitted here. What fitness is there, in depriving men of their natural rights and privileges as free-born and good subjects of an earthly kingdom,—or in imprisonment, banishment, &c.—either for reclaiming men from error, or for producing real religion,—producing the knowledge, faith, love, and obedience of the truth, as it is in Jesus? Would not all such measures seem rather to be destructive of true religion, properly so called? For is not all true religion a free and voluntary thing? Is not free choice, without compulsion or force, necessary to the very being of it? That religion which is caused or influenced by worldly motives and considerations, by civil rewards or punishments, however it may pass among men, is certainly naught in God's sight. — What then could be meant by praying, that our rulers would exert their influence for promoting the cause of Christ? What! must this cause be promoted by carnal power and military force? Is not the word, accompanied with the power of the Spirit, sufficient for reaching this important end?—sufficient for persuading and determining the people to assemble with one accord, to serve the highest Lord? Is not the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, (though not carnal, yet) mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ?—And if it pleases not God, by the means of his own appointment, to persuade and determine great multitudes, even whole nations and kingdoms, to come into the service of Christ, or that particular way of serving him which to us appears best; are we therefore to exalt our wisdom above the wisdom of God, in a way of devising means of our own invention for the accomplishing of that end?—Are not the following words of Henry's commentaries pertinent to the present purpose? “Right notions of the nature of Christ's kingdom, would keep “us at right methods for promoting the same.”

IV. As to the distribution of divine ordinances into *more ordinary* and *more solemn*; it may be observed, that by *the more solemn*, as opposed to *the more ordinary*, ordinances, doubtless the preacher meant, ordinances of a more extraordinary nature, which are but seldom to be observed; such, for instance, as public fasting, &c.: and from the connection it appeared, that, among this latter sort, he classed the Lord's supper, — as indeed other

other Seceders also do. But, then, one can scarce help asking, By what authority he, or they, do so? It is readily granted, that this ordinance is very solemn and important. The things therein signified and represented are the deep things of God, the result and produce of the manifold wisdom of God, which things the angels themselves desire to look into; and therefore are most striking and affecting to the spiritual mind, the believing soul, which, in the light of the word, knows, and is persuaded of these things. But the question here is, If the Lord's supper be of such a nature as that it ought but seldom to be dispensed in Christian congregations?—only once, or twice a-year, or so? Does the scripture-account authorise this view? see 1 Cor. xi. 23.—26. with Acts ii. 42. and other places. —Or does the West. Conf. and Directory (unto the whole doctrine whereof Seceders bind themselves by solemn oath) countenance it? See particularly Conf. chap. 21. sect. 5. where the due administration, and worthy receiving of the sacraments of the New Testament, is declared to be a part of the *ordinary* religious worship of God in the church, as well as the preaching and hearing of the word; and that, as opposed unto, or distinguished from, the more extraordinary service of God;—some instances whereof also are there condescended upon. —Further, is the so seldom observance of this ordinance, a going forth by the footsteps of the flock, the primitive churches and Christians, who, for aught that appears to us, stately came together on the first day of the week, as their circumstances would admit, for the breaking of bread sacramentally, as well as the other parts of social or church worship? — Or is it consonant to the views and sentiments of some of the most renowned of our reformers from Popery, for instance, that great man Calvin, who maintained, that the table of the Lord ought to be spread in Christian churches every first day of the week; — and roundly affirmed yearly communicating to be an invention of the devil? Since Seceders profess such a veneration for Calvin's principles and sentiments in sundry other things, how comes it to pass, they pay no manner of regard to this? — Which, perhaps, is fully as clear and obvious, as some other things they rigidly enough adhere to, and contend for. — If, according to the West. Conf. and Directory, the Lord's supper be a part of the ordinary worship and service of God in the church, frequently to be administered, and that of fasting an extraordinary duty, to be performed upon special occasions only;—for information's sake, I would ask, how Seceders reconcile their practice of publicly fasting often, and eating the Lord's supper but seldom, with their received and sworn-unto principles on this head? For I understand, they usually observe about five public fasts in the year;—two appoin

ed by the Synod, one by the Presbytery, one about a month before the sacrament, and another the week immediately before it, —besides, it may be, a sixth upon any special occurrence, as covenanting, &c. in their several congregations; and yet it is customary with them to dispense the Lord's supper only once a-year. Does not this look like changing extraordinary duties into ordinary, and ordinary into extraordinary? — Upon the whole, would not the revival of that truly apostolic and primitive practice, a frequent eating of the Lord's supper, through the divine blessing accompanying the same, be fully as conducive unto the spiritual edification and comfort of the churches of Christ, as the revival of the parliamentary laws and statutes imposing the national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant of the three kingdoms, and for bringing about the uniformity covenanted in the period between 1638 and 1650, which some have so zealously contended for?

I am, &c.





Mr GIB's Answer to the Thoughts and Queries in
the preceding Letter.

Taken from the Scots Magazine for April 1769.

To the Author of the SCOTS MAGAZINE.

SIR,

Edinburgh, April 6. 1769.

ONE of your correspondents has given an example of a very new method for exposing the Seceders,—while he attacks them upon the head of their *prayers*. I believe it is generally supposed, that even the most erroneous sorts of Christians use to be pretty orthodox in their prayers,—whatever defects or improprieties may be found in them; not so readily venting their errors in addresses to God, as to men. Your correspondent has, upon the matter, represented the case of the Seceders as the reverse of this; which would seem to be an endeavour for representing them as the most odious sort of Christians in the world.

He tells, that having “some time ago happened, on a Sabbath-day, to attend public worship in an Antiburgher Seceding meeting house,”—he “could not help taking particular notice of certain petitions and modes of expression, used by the preacher in prayer.” But I have some reasons for suspecting, that this story which he begins with, is all a fiction,—devised for a decent introduction to what follows. One of my reasons is, that his letter bears evident marks of harmony with a modern denomination of people, to whom Presbyterian principles are much the same as the Israelitish sacrifices were to the Egyptians.—an *abomination*: and I cannot think that such a person would allow himself to spend a Sabbath-day in such a meeting-house as he mentions. Another is,—that he mentions “certain modes of expression used by the preacher in prayer,” which I cannot believe were ever heard out of the mouth of any Seceding preacher; as may be explained in a little.

He mentions four exceptionable petitions then used by the preacher, as “common to those of that way:” and he concludes his detail of them with an [*&c.*]; as if he had others yet in reserve for being commented upon,—if this first attempt

of that sort, for ruining the Seceders, should prove unsuccessful.

The last of these four petitions which he mentions, is in a matter wholly religious ; “ That the Lord would bless “ the ordinances, both *more ordinary* and *more solemn*.” I shall not insist on the false account that he gives, of the frequency of public fasting among the Seceders, — which he finds fault with. What he chiefly takes occasion to handle upon this head is another fault that he charges upon them, — an infrequency of the ordinance of our Lord’s supper, which he supposes ought to be celebrated every Sabbath-day. And here he is not merely taking the field against the Seceders, — but likewise against the church of Scotland in all her periods ; yea, I suppose, against all the churches of the reformation. But I chuse not to enlarge upon this matter at present ; not from any apprehended difficulty of defending the Seceders against that charge, — but because I am not satisfied about the expediency of handling such matters in a periodical and miscellaneous publication. I shall only observe, that it is consistent enough for him to exclaim against bestowing the title *more solemn* upon the sacrament of the supper, — while he cannot bear that any other ordinance should be *more ordinary* ! And as this writer reckons (if he reckons any thing at all to the present purpose), that the sacrament of the supper ought to be dispensed in as much of a stated and ordinary course as any other ordinance of divine worship ; the Seceders must be excused, if the awful caution with which the canon of scripture is concluded should still deter them from such a principle, — as in one respect an evident adding unto, and in another respect an evident taking away from the word of God.

The other three petitions which he mentions, are in matters somewhat political ; and his commentary upon them is plainly calculated for rendering the Seceders obnoxious in civil society. It is true, that he deals in the way of question, about their meaning in these petitions. But it is well known, that the form of question is often used — as the strongest method of assertion : and I suppose no injury can be done to him, by taking his catechetical way of writing in this view ; while the meaning of these petitions which he questions about, is plainly set forth as the only meaning that they can bear.

The *first* of these petitions, is, — “ That the Lord would revive, and bring into repute, a covenanted work of reformation :” and he proposes this question upon it, — “ What is “ meant by the covenanted reformation itself ?” The gross injury done to Seceders, by his charging upon them that meaning of it which he mentions, shall be exposed by and by. But I shall first observe, that as this writer is evidently one of those
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who heartily hate "the covenanted reformation itself;" so he is for having it put over into the same account with all mismanagements or extremes that took place in carrying it on,—so as all may be buried in one common grave. The Seceders, however, have a very different view of the case; as is expressed by the *Associate Synod*, in their *Solemn Warning*. "Satan (they say) has been always busy, in times when religion flourished, or when reformation was promoted,—to weaken the credit thereof, by stirring up tumults and heresies; which the Lord permits, for holy and wise ends:—Satan was then busy in sowing his tares, and blowing up a fire of melancholy disorders: Amidst all this the Lord brought about a work in those days—which was honourable and glorious, and he cannot bear that the reputation thereof should suffer, from any concomitant mismanagements or infirmities of men."

He further questions, "What is meant by said reformation's being brought into repute?" As to which he plainly teaches,—that it is unwarrantable to pray for any such thing, about the uncorrupted cause of Christ; considering what the scripture represents, as the state of it in this world. Yet the Seceders can see no inconsistency of this, with believing that *the Lord shall build up Zion*, and that then *he shall appear in his glory*; or with praying that he may do so,—removing all the intamy which our covenanted reformation, and the testimonies for it that have been sealed by the blood of many martyrs, are lying under in this generation.

The *second* of these petitions, is,—“That the Lord would hasten the time when our civil magistrates should become nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church.”—Now, here are modes of expression which I cannot believe were ever heard out of the mouth of any Seceding preacher. Sometimes, indeed, they use the scripture-expressions, (Is. xlix. 23.); praying that *kings* may be made *nursing-fathers*, and *their queens nursing-mothers* to the church: but the mode of expression now charged upon them, as to this matter,—I reckon them utterly unacquainted with; or, if any one has ever used such language, I am sure it is not “common to those of that way.”—And as great strangers they are to the mode of expression in prayer, that the Lord would *hasten the time* when our civil magistrates *should become* as mentioned; as if no such time were yet come,—a supposition grossly inconsistent with their professed principles, as shall be explained before I conclude. But they reckon that promise still in force, as a promise of a future blessing; and they cannot imagine how a praying for the accomplishment of it in that view—should mean a denying what accomplishment of it has already taken place.

He puts this question about the petition presently under consideration,—“ Does not this plainly suppose, that the powers “ which presently be in G. Britain are not so,” (*viz.* nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church)? It may do so, as he has laid it; but not, as Seceders use it. They will, as readily as he can, allow those characters to the powers which presently be in G. Britain,—so far as “ the disciples of Christ, or “ church-members, in their dominions, are allowed to live quiet “ and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty;” so far as they “ protect church-members from outward violence, in the “ exercise of their religion,—who behave themselves as good “ and peaceable subjects of the civil state;—not only defending “ them in the enjoyment of their civil properties in general,— “ but, in special, of that precious natural right of mankind, “ liberty of conscience, also.” And accordingly the *Associate Presbytery* did not scruple to acknowledge, (in the *declaration and defence of their principles anent the present civil government*), that “ security is given, by the present civil government, unto “ our religious lives and liberties, such as no other people now “ on earth enjoys the like.”

He further questions,—“ How does the preacher understand “ the passage of the prophet, to which this petition seems to refer?” And I can answer him for all the Seceders,—that they do not understand it as *necessarily* meaning, that, in order to any answering of the character of nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers, the kings and queens *must be* church-members, or Christians; more than that they could no way answer this character of old, without being members of the Jewish church. They will not scruple to acknowledge, with Mr *Henry*,—that the promise referred to had some accomplishment to the Jewish church; so far as “ divers of the kings of Persia were very tender of “ their interests, countenanced and encouraged them, as Cyrus, “ Darius, and Artaxerxes.”

The *third* of these petitions, is,—“ That the Lord would dis- “ pose our rulers to exert their power and influence for pro- “ moting the cause and kingdom of Christ.” In considering his commentary upon this petition, I shall take in what coincides with it—in his commentaries upon the other two.

The amount of the whole is as follows. He represents the meaning of the Seceders, by “ the covenanted reformation,” to be this, *viz.* “ An external uniformity in one system of “ doctrines, one mode of worship, and one form of church- “ government, through the kingdoms of England, Scotland, “ and Ireland,—to be brought about by the interposition of “ parliamentary authority and civil pains,—without the least “ toleration or indulgence to such as might scruple at any part “ of

“ of the said uniformity ;—together with, it may be, the severe
 “ laws enacted by both the English and Scotch parliaments, e-
 “ specially the latter, in that period, for the promoting there-
 “ of ;—and for the non-revival of which, the aforesaid loudly
 “ complain of, and testify against the revolution-parliament :”
 And that, accordingly, they would have the civil powers “ to
 “ impose the Secession-scheme—upon all his Majesty’s subjects,
 “ of whatsoever quality, rank, and degree, under all civil pains ;
 “ and forcibly to suppress, or root out of their land and empire, all
 “ those the ministers of the Secession might think proper to ad-
 “ judge Heretics, Sectarians, Latitudinarians, &c. &c.” And that
 thus our rulers should promote the cause and kingdom of Christ
 by “ carnal weapons, carnal power and policy, or temporal re-
 “ wards and punishments,—civil pains or temporal evils, ei-
 “ ther of the greater or lesser sort,—carnal power and military
 “ force.”

This is, indeed, a most hideous representation of the Seceders. But what reason have they given for it ? They have no secret principles, they publish all to the world ; and there is not a syllable of all their publications to such a purpose, but much to the very reverse : It is hard, then, to have such a charge against them wrested out of some general expressions in their prayers. They can most heartily join with this writer in his exclamation, —“ Far hence be all such methods of violence, from the cause
 “ and kingdom of the Prince of Peace :” and they are at as great a loss as he can be,—to see any “ fitness in depriving men
 “ of their natural rights and privileges as free-born and good
 “ subjects of an earthly kingdom,—or in imprisonment, banish-
 “ ment, &c.—either for reclaiming men from error, or for
 “ producing real religion.”—But I must explain this matter a little further.

Compulsive methods of dealing with men, in matters of conscience or mere religion, were introduced under the first Christian emperors : and these methods were for some time used in behalf of the truth. But such an engine, which was not fitted for any real service in the kingdom of Christ,—was soon transferred, agreeably to its nature, and the proper use for which Satan transformed into an angel of light had projected it,—to be a main engine for raising up and supporting the kingdom of Antichrist, having a chief place among his abominations. At the time of the Reformation in the last century, some specious remains of the leaven of that abomination—had not been got entirely purged out ; the natural rights of conscience were not generally understood : and some working of that leaven, in the compulsory terms which the Presbyterians of the English parliament and Westminster-assembly stood upon, when treating
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with the Independents of the assembly and army,—are what I freely reckon one great spring of the ruin which soon befell the Reformation-work of that period. The case of Scotland, at that time, was somewhat peculiar; as the enemies of Reformation-work in that kingdom were, at the same time, enemies to the civil constitution and liberties of their country: And it cannot be justly inferred, from any principles of compulsion which the Reformers then stood upon, that they would have made the same application of these principles in such a period as the present,—when people of different and opposite denominations in religion do agree in the common character—of “good and peaceable subjects of the civil state.” Nor can there be any thing farther from truth, than that the Seceders ever complained of, or testified against the Revolution-parliament, — for the non-revival of any of the compulsory laws of the former period.

The *Associate Presbytery*, when acknowledging the Reformation of that period in their judicial *Testimony*, did immediately add,—“It is not hereby intended to affirm, That, under the “above-mentioned period, there was nothing defective or “wanting as to the beauty and order of the house of God, or “that there was nothing culpable in the administration.” And particularly, they have made an open display of their principles, in opposition to all compulsory methods of that or any other period in matters of mere religion,—by their above-mentioned *declaration and defence*.

As the general scope of it is, to establish this principle,—“That the Lord’s people ought to render subjection and obedience in *all matters lawful*, not only for wrath, but also for “conscience sake, unto *any* magistrate *who is*, and *while* he “is acknowledged *as such* by the civil state they belong to:” so they have thereby explained their principles about the power of the civil magistrate, in the following terms, *viz.* “The “public good of *outward* and *common* order in all *reasonable* “society, unto the glory of God, is the *great* and *only* end “which those invested with magistracy *can* propose, in a *sole* “respect unto that office: And as, in prosecuting this end, “*civilly*, according to their office, it is *only* over mens good “and evil works that they can have any inspection; so it is “*only* over these which they must *needs* take cognisance of, for “the *said* public good; while, at the same time, their doing so “must be in *such* a manner, and proceed *so far* *all*enarly, as “is *requisite* for *that* end; without assuming any lordship immediately over mens *consciences*, or making any encroachment “upon the *special* *privileges* and *business* of the church. And “moreover, as the *whole* *institution* and *end* of their office “are

“ are cut out by, and lie within the compass of *natural principles* ; it were absurd to suppose, that there could or ought to be any *exercise* thereof toward its end, in the forefaid circumstances, but what can be *argued for* and *defended from natural principles* : as indeed there is *nothing* specially allotted and allowed to magistrates, by the *word of God*, and the *Constitutions* of the *Reformed churches*, but what can be *so*.”

I cannot seek room here, for commenting upon the above declaration ; nor does there seem to be any particular need for doing so. But I may appeal to all the world, if principles of greater and better freedom on that subject were ever taught by Mr *Locke*, — or any other advocate for the rights of mankind. And these principles are what every minister and probationer among those Seceders now fallen upon,—is taken expressly engaged to maintain,—at receiving licence and ordination.

I may further observe, that these Seceders, when testifying against *toleration*,—have not left any occasion to imagine, that they mean toleration of every sort ; or such negative toleration, as lies in making no encroachment on mens natural rights upon religious accounts : For the *Associate Synod*, in their *Solemn Warning*, have expressly and purposely defined the toleration which they mean as testifying against,—to be “ such a toleration as gives countenance and encouragement to errors and corruptions, with an hinderance of ecclesiastical discipline.”

Agreeably to all this,—in an *address to the Associate Synod*, which I read before them near ten years ago, and afterwards published, I had occasion to speak as follows, viz. “ For my part, I look on all the *magisterial ways* of civil power and authority, as being *none of God's ordinances* for reclaiming a backsliding generation from a course of prevailing errors and corruptions, about the matter of revealed religion.” And what I so declared has never, either then or since, met with a syllable of contradiction from any of them.

But an explanation of the various and unexceptionable methods which are still competent to civil rulers (those *who are* such, not *as they are* such), in exerting their power and influence for promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ, consistently with the above principles,—is what I could not expect room enough for in your Magazine. It may be sufficient here, to illustrate the matter by a familiar allusion.—If one were praying, that the *Carron company* might be disposed to promote the interests of morality and religion among their numerous dependents ; would it be reasonable to suppose that he could have no meaning at all, if he did not mean that the company should do so by the force of fires and hammers, with all the other engines

gines of their iron-work,—or that no other ways, just and rational ways, of doing so, were competent unto them?

Upon the whole; no person who must be supposed to know the principles of Seceders, could charge them as your correspondent has done,—except from WILFUL MALICE; such as I should not suppose any man capable of, had I not lately met with a very striking instance of it upon the same subject, (along with a contexture of many other most false and abusive reproaches, which the writer could not but know to be such), in *A review of the principles and conduct of the Seceders*. I will not suppose any such thing of your correspondent: But I may at least say, that, before making his late attack upon the Seceders,—he should have been at more pains to know *what they are*.

One thing, indeed, is peculiar to them,—concerning the many other religious denominations of people in this country, who have their particular oppositions to one another, but who concur (either openly or under a covert) in an opposition to the Reformation-principles of the church of Scotland, (I think no shame to say, our covenanted Reformation); that all of these do likewise concur, in having those Seceders whom your correspondent falls upon—for the *common butt* of their arrows. This is far from being a situation in itself agreeable: but it has one peculiar advantage,—as being one of the evidences that the LORD'S CAUSE is among them, that the LORD himself is with them.

I know no reason, of prudence, fear, or shame,—for imitating your correspondent, in making this letter anonymous: And therefore I conclude with signifying that *I am, &c.*

ADAM GIB.



LET



L E T T E R S

T O

M R A D A M G I B.

L E T T E R I.

S I R,

UPON reading your letter in the Scots Magazine for April 1769, inserted above, *p. 9. & seq.* to me there appeared so much of, what an ill-natured writer would call, evasion, dissingenuity, artful glossing and colouring,—that I resolved to pass it over in silence: which is the true reason of my being so long of taking any notice of it. But, for reasons known to myself, of late I altered said resolution; and began to think of making some animadversions thereon. These I would have communicated to you through the same channel with the *Queries and Thoughts* themselves, also inserted above, *p. 1. & seq.* namely, the Magazine; had I not foreseen, that, in order to set the matters in question between you and me in a proper light, I would exceed all bounds for a place there: and besides, it was apprehended, not a few of the readers would reckon these matters (whatever you or I may think of them) altogether unworthy of their regard. I determined therefore to offer them to your consideration, in a separate address to yourself: whence I am at the greater liberty to enlarge, as may seem necessary. If I should indulge myself in a few digressions, I beg you will not take it amiss; especially as, it is hoped, they will be found not altogether foreign to the main purposes. What occurs shall be digested into a series of letters; that so I may not weary you with a very long one.

You must excuse me for being of opinion, that your answers
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are far from being such as were desired,—*candid, pertinent, and satisfactory.*

Your candour may be judged of from the following, and other such like instances. —“ I have some reasons for suspecting, “ that the story which he begins with, is all a fiction.—His letter bears evident marks of harmony with a modern denomination of people, to whom Presbyterian principles are much the same as the Israelitish sacrifices were to the Egyptians,—an *abomination.*—This writer is evidently one of those who heartily hate the covenanted reformation itself :” Which, from the mouth or pen of a Seceder, I just take to be as if you had said, —“ He is evidently one of those who heartily hate” God, and all that is good. —“ No person who must be supposed to know the “ principles of Seceders, could charge them as your correspondent has done, — except from *WILFUL MALICE.*” — Yet it must be acknowledged, that you have rather shewn more candour and softness on this occasion, than on some others, when it seemed good unto you to display your controversial talents : for although you be much renowned on sundry other accounts, yet candour, civility, and discretion, are none of your most shining virtues, or distinguishing endowments.

How pertinent and satisfactory they are, will best appear by carefully comparing them with the queries and thoughts as stated and illustrated in mine. The result of my doing so was,—I could not help thinking, that either inadvertently or designedly, I will not say which, you had evaded giving any direct positive answer at all unto the most material of them. Perhaps you found, it would not be for edification to enter particularly into the merits of this cause ; as, I have heard, the witnessing judicatories, whereof you are a leading member, sometimes find even as to causes, which they mean to make the ground of condemnatory sentences, or solemn censures.

By this letter, if you be serious therein, I am abundantly satisfied in two things, whereof I had no small suspicion before, *viz.* that you have really, though under covert, refused from some very substantial parts of the Secession-scheme, as stated in their judicial testimony, and sworn to in their bond and confession of sins for renewing the national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant of the three kingdoms, understood according to the most plain and obvious meaning of language :—and also, that though Seceders swear a strict uniformity, yet they are far from being uniform in their views and sentiments even as to, what they call, their received and sworn-to principles. Were it necessary, sundry instances might be brought to this purpose. Whence it would seem, that, for the present, their uniformity, in a great measure, lies in using the same
sounds,

found, such as, a covenanted work of reformation,—the Lord's cause and testimony, as among the hands of this Synod, &c. ; while, at the same time, they are not agreed among themselves concerning the precise and determinate meaning of these phrases. —If you should think proper to contradict me in this ; I must call upon you to produce sufficient documents, that they all heartily approve of the several sentiments contained in, or fairly deducible from your own letter. Until you do this, I can pay no great regard to bare assertions. And when you do so, it is probable, I will venture to affirm, that some Seceders, yea, Seceding ministers, have of late changed their sentiments relative to certain points ; and give my reasons for so affirming.

And if the present clergy of the Secession be not of the same mind in all points with the original framers of their scheme as sworn to in the bond and acknowledgment of sins ; or if they be not agreed among themselves as to the meaning of some parts of their oath and covenant,—as to all the several articles and things therein homologated or abjured ; — how can they with a good conscience lead on poor simple people to swear it ? How come they solemnly to dictate, that, without coming under the bond of this covenant, people cannot be witnesses for, nor confess Christ before men ? Or how have they freedom to persist in making it the basis and foundation, the bond and ligament of all church union and communion among them ? agreeably to the “ act of the Associate Presbytery anent the terms of ministerial and Christian communion,” which is still in force ; and expressly enacts, “ That the renovation of the national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant of the three nations, in the manner now agreed upon by the Presbytery, shall be THE term of ministerial communion with this Presbytery, and LIKE WISE of Christian communion, in the admission of people to sealing ordinances ; excluding therefrom all opposers, contemners, and slights of the said renovation of our solemn covenants.”

This being the case, one would think, it were now high time for the people of that way to begin to think and judge MORE for themselves, and give LESS implicit faith unto their leaders, than, it is suspected, some of them at least have hitherto done. Permit me, before I go further, to enlarge a little upon this hint ; which indeed is not quite foreign to our purpose. If ever people will allow themselves to think seriously and impartially, should it not be concerning matters wherein a solemn oath unto the eternal Jehovah is interposed ? For, sure, that is no trivial, but an awful and weighty affair : whence it is given as a character of the fearers of the Lord, that they *fear an oath*, Eccl. ix. 2. Such as swear by that great and dreadful name, JEHOVAH

our God, particularly, such as enter into a religious oath and covenant, should certainly be intimately acquainted with the whole matter and contents thereof, and, upon due examination by the rule of God's word, fully persuaded in their own minds and consciences of the warrantableness and propriety of every thing in it: for he that sweareth, *The Lord liveth*, ought to do it *in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness*, Jer. iv. 2. And, says Paul, *Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind*, Rom. xiv. 5. If this be not in some good measure the case, must not their swearing be rash, ignorant, and implicit? and, consequently, amount unto a taking of the name of God in vain? which is strictly prohibited and severely threatened, Exod. xx. 7. Whether the generality of common people, who have not much access to be versant in histories of former times, or to get themselves acquainted with the acts and proceedings of both church and state in distant periods, can be supposed to swear the Secession-bond, reduplicating upon the historical part of the acknowledgment of sins, in judgment, and with a full persuasion of mind;—shall be submitted unto the neutral and disinterested, who may be pleased to read it, and carefully attend to all its vast contents and references. If it could be supposed, that any of the ministers of your way were conscious to themselves, that the people could not so swear it; how shocking must it be for them, either directly or indirectly, to promote that work, or any way concur therein,—yea, not fairly and honestly remonstrate against it?—Is it not at first sight clear from the face of that oath and covenant, which you make *the* term of Christian communion, that in order to people's having fellowship with you in the peculiar ordinances of the gospel, it is necessary they should be acquainted with human histories, particularly, the history of this nation for a hundred or two hundred years backward? But, pray, where has the Head of the church set the fellowship of gospel-churches upon such a condition as that?

In “An attempt to explain, vindicate, and enforce the important duty of renewing our solemn covenants,” p. 164. you, with your faithful friend and ally, Mr Morison, have taught, that in swearing oaths in general, and, of consequence, the Secession-bond in particular, persons, as it were, lay their souls in pledge for the truth of what they declare, and the performance of what they engage unto; and, upon the matter, put at God's justice to punish them if they swear falsely, or deal treacherously in the covenant. This exactly agrees unto the following clause of the national covenant of Scotland: “We shall continue in the obedience of the doctrine and discipline of this kirk, and shall defend the same, according to our vocation and power, all the days of our lives, under the pains contained in the law,”

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[For information's sake, it is asked, — what law? whether human or divine? whether the penal statutes of the worldly kingdom, or the laws of the kingdom of heaven?], “and danger both of body and soul in the day of God's fearful judgments.”

Now, wholly abstracting from any consideration of the propriety or impropriety of such ways of speaking concerning acts of gospel worship and obedience, or acts which pretend so to be, — if this really be the case, certainly it is highly reasonable, yea, extremely necessary, that those who enter into the bond should have a distinct knowledge, and thorough persuasion of mind from God's word concerning the huge mass of things therein contained, or reduplicated upon. At this rate, it would not seem to be safe for them to rest on mere human testimony, or the clergy's bare word and strong assertions relative to these things; but they would need to see them with their own eyes, — and to have their faith and persuasion, as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of them, resting upon a divine testimony, — upon the authority of God in his word. For, sure, it is no light matter to lay their precious and immortal souls in pledge; and put at God's tremendous justice to punish them, in case of failure, — in case of altering their mind or conduct concerning any of the things, even the “matters somewhat political,” engaged to be contended for, or against. In this view, people should seriously consider, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, Heb. x. 31. *For our God is a consuming fire*, Heb. xii. 29. *Whence destruction from God was a terror unto holy Job; and by reason of his highness he could not endure*, chap. xxxi. 23.

With those of your way, I understand, it is reckoned a grievous crime to examine, and call in question any thing that once falls under the designation of received and sworn-to principles, (that is, received by the Associate Presbytery or Synod in their judicial testimony, and sworn to in their bond), — which, they say, are to be held as maxims and axioms. This they endeavour to prove from Prov. xx. 25. *It is a snare to the man who devour-eth that which is holy; and after vows to make inquiry*. Whence it comes to pass, that if any of your number happen to be straitened in their consciences as to any part of your scheme, even though it should be that which is “in matters somewhat political,” it is usual for them to have the formidable artillery of impugning received principles, after vows making inquiry, apostasy, perjury, &c. very warmly played off against them: and if they have not such convenient consciences, as to knock under to these forcible reasonings, they must be cut off from the body by solemn excommunications. — I hope, you will “know some
“reason

“reason of prudence, fear, or shame,” for not ascribing my saying so of the Seceders unto “wilful malice.”

Without positively determining what may be the precise meaning of the above-mentioned text; thus much, it is presumed, I may venture to affirm, that had our first reformers from Popery understood it, as the generality of your way do, and acted accordingly, they had never moved forward in that ever-memorable work,—the reformation: for, doubtless, they were under vows and engagements to cleave fast unto the several abominations of the Antichristian state. Had they therefore tenaciously stuck to such a sense of that passage of sacred writ, in all likelihood, we had still been groaning under the tyranny and oppression of the Pope of Rome: In which case, we durst not have made any inquiry in religion, either before or after vows; but must wholly have given up our consciences unto the guidance and direction of his Holiness and his clergy,—in all points believing as the church; that is, the Pope and his clergy, should happen to believe. Whence I cannot help saying, that what is generally held and taught among you on this head, would seem to sap the very foundations of the reformation; in as much as it is diametrically opposite unto the first and grand principle upon which it turned and proceeded, even that of a free search and inquiry after truth;—searching the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. And besides, I am not sure, if, upon the foresaid use and application of that text, the four brethren could have seceded from the national church of Scotland: at least, I would ask,—if said step was fully consistent with their ordination vows and engagements as ministers of that church?—I can readily perceive, that this way of going to work,—first driving poor simple people, particularly, young, unthinking ones, into the bond, and then terrifying them from an after-inquiry, or calling any thing in question,—is very well calculated for securing the party, and keeping a following: but I am not sure, if it be as consistent with the people’s undeniable right and duty of searching the scriptures, and in matters of religion judging therefrom for themselves, and acting according to their own judgment.

But for once supposing it to be so heinous a crime, to examine and call in question any thing contained or reduplicated upon in the bond, after persons are in it;—upon this supposition, I would presume to offer a word of advice unto both the ministers and people of your way; and if they will not take it, I cannot help it.—The people, such of them, I mean, as are not yet in the bond, I would humbly and earnestly advise, to be sure to make a *previous* inquiry,—to get their judgments well informed as to the whole and every part of the subject-matter of that oath and covenant

covenant (the most complex and intricate, perhaps, that ever was imposed upon any Christian people), particularly all the historical transactions, either approved or disapproved, — to examine all strictly and impartially by the rule of God's word ; — and then lay their hand upon their heart, and coolly think with themselves, if they have full freedom to lay their precious souls in pledge, and put at God's terrible justice to punish them, in case of their not continuing all their days to contend for or against all the things there engaged to be contended for or against. Of the things engaged to be contended against, I beg leave to give these two or three instances ; — the public resolutions, *anno* 1650 or 1651, — allowing persons to hold places and trusts, civil or military, in the worldly kingdom, who might not be well affected to the covenants, and every branch of the uniformity covenanted ; — the accepting of the indulgences granted to some outed ministers, *annis* 1669 and 1672 ; — the oaths, declarations, and bonds, imposed in the period after the restoration of King Charles II. which, however wicked and impious, few of the common people in our times ever saw, or know any thing about ; — the Presbyterian ministers taking the benefit of, and not rather testifying against, K. James VII.'s toleration, *anno* 1687 ; — the manifold evils testified against in the revolution-settlement, — which not a few have thought to be by far the best that ever obtained in Scotland ; — the incorporating union with England, *anno* 1707 * ; — the toleration, 1712, — which allows good and peaceable Protestant subjects, the free exercise of their religion ; though they should not in all points conform to that by law established ; — the allegiance and abjuration oaths, — which, whether right or wrong, I am sure, hundreds of the people who swear this covenant never saw, nor had any occasion for seeking after the knowledge of them ; — and so forth of many other such like things, which I shall pass without mentioning. — And let them not be biassed, or overawed into an implicit and servile

* The Associate Presbytery go so high on this head, that they reckon it a righteous judgment from God on our nation, and the representatives thereof, — because of their not taking up at the revolution the covenants, and the measures pursued in the period between 1638 and 1650. Hence, when testifying against the parliament 1690 on this very score, they immediately add, — “ It is a righteous, just, and holy dispensation of Providence, that we should be no more a nation ; and that our noble-
“ men, barons, and burgeses, — should be for ever deprived of the oppor-
“ tunity of acting by themselves in a parliamentary capacity,” — Test. p. 42. But really I cannot admire their politics here : for taking the incorporating union with England in a civil light, in which this passage would evidently seem to consider it ; to me it would appear rather to be a national blessing, than a national judgment.

compliance,

compliance, by the confident monopoly which their ministers make of truth and duty, or the Lord's cause and testimony : for, though they should be secluded from your communion, there is ground to hope, that some share of these things may be met with elsewhere ;—that the Lord Jesus hath not invested them with an **EXCLUSIVE** right of professing his truths, and observing his institutions, nor restricted the promise of his presence unto them only ;—but that he warrants and allows such of his disciples as cannot in all points come up to their terms (settled at Edinburgh, Feb. 14. 1744) to associate together in church-order, and observe all things whatsoever he has commanded, according to the best views they can attain unto of these things from the scriptures, — and that, according to his own all-gracious word, he will be present with them in so doing.

And as to the ministers, I would humbly advise them, to deal fairly and honestly with simple well-meaning people in this weighty affair, — letting them into the true spirit and tendency of the whole and every part of it. Let them inculcate the necessity of the previous inquiry before hinted at, and warn them of the great sin and danger of rash—ignorant swearing ; and when any of the people make application for joining in this work, let them be closely examined (much more so than, I understand, is usually the case) upon the whole matter, not only of the bond itself, but also the historical part of the acknowledgment of sins, on which it expressly reduplicates, to see if they know what they are about,—if they have a suitable understanding of all the things engaged unto or abjured, and if their persuasion of the rightness of the one sort, and sinfulness of the other, seems to go upon, or be influenced by satisfying scripture grounds and arguments ; — allowing none to swear where this is not the case. This, I am sensible, would greatly diminish the number of covenanters, and, consequently, of communicants too,—provided the above act of the Associate Presbytery be not fallen from ; but, perhaps it might yield fully as much peace and quiet of mind some day or other.

I am afraid, however, that by this time you will have enough of my advices : and therefore I shall conclude, at present, with signifying, that I am,

S I R,

Your most humble servant.

L E T-

L E T T E R II.

S I R,

HAVING in my former observed some things concerning that oath and covenant which is the peculiar and distinguishing badge of Seceders, and which indeed is nearly connected with the matters in question between you and me,—and also given a general opinion of your letter to the author of the Magazine; I shall now proceed to a more particular review of its various contents.

“ I believe it is generally supposed,” say you, “ that even the most erroneous sorts of Christians use to be pretty orthodox in their prayers, whatever defects or improprieties may be found in them; not so readily venting their errors in their addresses unto God, as to men.” What is generally supposed on this head, I cannot say; because I do not remember to have ever seen or heard it treated of. But is it not natural to think, that mens prayers will be formed upon, and tinged with their religious principles, whether sound or unsound? for instance, that the prayers of Calvinists on the one hand, and Arminians, Socinians, &c. on the other, will favour of their respective hypotheses. And besides, your manner of expression here would seem to suppose, that all such as are erroneous, are knowingly and wittingly so; which, in my view, is a very harsh supposition. — “ Your correspondent has,” add you, “ upon the matter represented the Seceders as the reverse of this; which would seem to be an endeavour for representing them as the most odious sort of Christians in the world.” This truly would be a strange endeavour; since they avail themselves of being the best Christians in the world, yea, God’s only witnesses on earth. You will observe, however, that I just related certain petitions and modes of expression which I heard used by a Seceding preacher in prayer; and then observed, that not having been fully satisfied as to the determinate meaning of some or all of them, I was led to think more closely of them afterwards: in consequence whereof, I proposed sundry queries, in order, if possible, to find out the precise and determinate meaning of them as used by Seceders. “ He tells,” say you, “ that having some time ago happened, on a Sabbath-day, to attend public worship in an Antiburgher Seceding meeting-house. — But I have some reasons for suspecting, that this story which he begins with, is all a fiction,” &c. As to this suspicion of yours concerning the story which I begin with; I assure you, it is not “ all a fiction,” but a most certain fact. Now, for your reasons: — “ One of my reasons,” say you, “ is, that his letter bears evident marks of harmony with a modern denomination of people,” &c. A bold stroke indeed! What this modern denomination of people, which have thus

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incurred

incurred your high displeasure, are, you have not thought proper to declare : and so I need not concern myself with them ; especially as, I can assure you, I am no partisan, no great stickler for parties or party-schemes in religion, nor yet the tool of any particular party. I am not conscious to myself of a peculiar attachment to any religious denomination, farther than to me they appear to be holding fast, not the doctrines and commandments of men, but those of Jesus Christ, and making conscience of observing whatever he has commanded.

When reading this, I was reminded of Hervey's beautiful words and generous sentiments. Theron inveighing against Aspasio on account of his " Puritanical nostrum of imputed righteousness ;"—he answers : " You know, Theron, I have long ago disavowed that ignoble prejudice, which rejects doctrines, or despises persons, because they happen to be branded with contemptible names. It is true, the writers styled Puritans, have been remarkable for their attachment to this peculiarity of the gospel.—But must it therefore be wrong, because maintained by that particular set of people ? Or are they the only advocates for this important truth ?—To conceive a dislike of any doctrine, only because persons of a particular denomination have been very officious to promote its reception ; this is hardly consistent with an impartial inquiry after truth." *Dialogues, dial. 2.* What ! because a frequent eating of the Lord's supper, state-toleration, or liberty of conscience, &c. may have been espoused and maintained by some particular denomination or set of people, who happen to be branded with contemptible names ; must the things themselves therefore be wrong ? Must we conceive a dislike of, and reject these things, only because persons of a certain way have been officious to promote their reception ? Would this be consistent with an impartial inquiry after truth ? Or are these the only people who have appeared as advocates for these points ? No : the pens of not a few worthy and eminent persons of different denominations have, in a masterly manner, been employed in their defence. But what do you mean by " Presbyterian principles," in the present connection ? You cannot possibly mean Presbyterian principles *in cumulo*, or whatever Presbyterians have held and maintained concerning the doctrines of faith, the worship of God, and government of the church ; because you assert, that " my letter bears evident marks of harmony with a modern denomination of people, to whom the principles," you here call, " Presbyterian, are much the same as the Israelitish sacrifices were to the Egyptians,—an abomination." Now, no person could thus charge my letter, with regard to Presbyterian principles understood as above, " except from wilful malice ;"

"lice.;" such as, I should be sorry to suppose a Christian divine, and first-rate Seceding clergyman capable of. The reason is plain; because you yourself have, upon the matter, declared, that my letter is mostly concerning "matters somewhat political." But Presbyterian principles *in cumulo*, I hope, are not matters somewhat political. Excepting that part which respects the great infrequency of the Lord's supper in Seceding churches, (and where is the Presbyterian principle for the once, or at most twice a-year sacrament?) my letter goes chiefly, if not wholly, upon the points of an external national uniformity in religion, to be brought about and maintained by the interposition of parliamentary power and civil pains; non-toleration of those who cannot in all points conform to the established religion, or what the leading party of churchmen in a nation, supported by the civil authority, may give out to be the true religion;—the part, very many have supposed, the civil magistrate, called Christian, ought as a nurse-father to act toward the church, &c. But, sure, these and the like things are not Presbyterian principles in bulk; nor indeed are they peculiar unto Presbyterians. They have, it is true, been zealously held by those of that way; particularly, they were so by both the Scotch and English Presbyterians in the covenanting period between 1638 and 1650: but then, it is to be remembered, they were so held by them, in common with other denominations also; such as, the Episcopalians and Roman Catholics.

But may not this high charge be very well retorted upon yourself, thus?—Your own letter bears evident marks of harmony with those, to whom most of the things questioned about in mine, which indeed have been maintained by Presbyterians, are much the same as the Israelitish sacrifices were to the Egyptians,—an abomination: For you roundly affirm, that "compulsive methods of dealing with men in matters of conscience or mere religion," (which were so much stood upon by Presbyterians in former times), "were projected by Satan transformed into an angel of light, to be a main engine for raising up and supporting the kingdom of Antichrist, having a chief place among his abominations:"—You join in the exclamation, "Far hence be all such methods of violence from the cause and kingdom of the Prince of Peace:"—You acknowledge "liberty of conscience to be a precious natural right of mankind, wherein all who behave themselves as good and peaceable subjects of the civil state, are to be defended:"—Yea, you declare for "principles of as good and great liberty and freedom, as were ever taught by Mr Locke*, or any other

* Mr Gib's "appeal to all the world, if principles of greater and better

“ther advocate for the rights of mankind, &c.” I profess, I am quite astonished to find such declarations and assertions as these, and sundry others to the same purpose, coming from the pen of a Seceding minister. I am apt to think, you have forgot yourself. Yea, “I have some reasons for suspecting, that,” were it not for the sake of your great weight and importance

“better freedom on that subject were ever taught by Mr Locke, or “any other advocate for the rights of mankind,” viz. than those of Seceders;—raised an anxiety in me to see Mr Locke on toleration. The book, however, never came in my way, till within a few days of these papers going to the press. I have just got time to read the first of his letters on the subject, namely, that to Professor Limborch; which gave rise unto the subsequent ones, by way of answers “*to the author of the “argument of said letter briefly considered and answered.*” From the knowledge that I have of the principles of Seceders, and the at first sight obvious sentiments of that letter, I must be excused for being of opinion, that the appeal is not only ill founded, but even amounts unto an attempt to impose upon the common sense of mankind. I would wish rather to suppress, than in the least encourage the ideas, which this appeal is calculated for raising in my mind concerning the appellant. I would not have been so much surprised at his making an appeal of this sort in a separate publication, which, he might apprehend, would be read by very few that were acquainted with the principles of that learned man, and masterly “advocate for the rights of “mankind:” but to do it in a periodical paper, read, I suppose, by not a few of the most intelligent of this country, argues a degree of assurance, perhaps, altogether unparalleled.—Mr Locke, I find, sets toleration on a general footing; and accordingly maintains, that the civil magistrate ought to tolerate all religious opinions, rites, and usages, that do not evidently endanger the civil state,—disturb the public peace, or encroach upon private property. Pray, then, are not these “principles of greater and better freedom on the subject,” than the original principles of Seceders (for it is not Mr Gib’s new set of principles that I have to do with) on the head of the civil magistrate’s power *circa sacra*, the solemn-league uniformity, non-toleration of those who differ therefrom, &c. In this connection it may be observed, that the dissenting brethren in the Westminster-assembly, were very far from carrying the matter this length, or from setting toleration on so broad a bottom: they only extended it to those who agreeing in one and the same confession of faith, might nevertheless differ in some points relative to the order and government of the church, or things of that kind. And yet both the English and Scotch Presbyterians opposed them therein with all their might; yea, were unanimously of opinion, that even such a limited toleration was diametrically opposite unto the solemn league and covenant. It is easy to see then, that the Seceders must either widely differ from Mr Locke on this subject; or from our covenanting ancestors, yea, and give up with the solemn league itself, at least as understood by the original framers and promoters thereof. They may chuse which they will,

in the Associate Synod, some of your brethren would tell you, that in this letter you had impugned their received and sworn-to principles; and vented Sectarian tenets, which will be in danger of landing you in Independency.—But passing this; although you might “know some reason of prudence” or policy, for throwing out some such squibs against me, (for what will not a politician at times be obliged to do for supporting a measure, or serving a turn?), yet I reckon myself very happy, to find you agreeing with me in every, or almost every sentiment that can be fairly charged upon mine,—except one, of which by and by: so that there is scarce any one point of doctrine in dispute between us; at least, so far as I am capable of discerning.

“Another (reason),” say you, “is,—that he mentions certain modes of expression used by the preacher in prayer, which I cannot believe were ever heard out of the mouth of any Seceding preacher; as may be explained in a little.” As you have put off your explanation till afterwards; so shall I my remarks; and shall now break off, signifying, that I am, with great respect,—Sir, yours, &c.

L E T T E R III.

S I R,

Since my last, my thoughts happened to turn upon a passage of sacred writ; which I beg leave to give a place here. Quotations from that invaluable book, I think, do most of all grace or ornament the page of Christian writers. Scripture-texts, or Bible-words pertinently applied, are *like apples of gold in pictures of silver*, Prov. xxv. 11. And, sure, it should not be totally neglected in an epistolary correspondence between Christian friends; especially where matters of religion are any wise concerned. For, in all such matters, the infallible oracles of the living God are to be as *a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path*: unto which, therefore, we do well to take good heed.—The passage is;—*For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise you, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh, a barbarian; and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say Amen at thy giving of thanks,*

thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? 1 Cor. xiv. 8. 9. 11. 14. 15. 16.—The substance of what, at the time, cast up to me therefrom, was to this purpose;—That such as are employed in social or public prayer, should endeavour to express themselves as intelligibly as may be; they should make use of phrases and modes of expression which are easy to be understood, and convey a certain and determinate sort of meaning: for how can others say Amen, or join with them, if they understand not what they say? It might not be improper for some Seceding preachers to attend unto this; lest some unlearned, in “matters somewhat political,” happening to come into their worshipping assemblies, should not be in case to say Amen unto their “petitions in matters” of that sort. I have also thought it best, to keep as near as possible to scripture-language, or, at least, to use language clearly and obviously of the same meaning and import with the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. Though you and I should differ in some other things, I hope, we will agree in this. And therefore I shall now go on to what I had chiefly in view on this occasion.

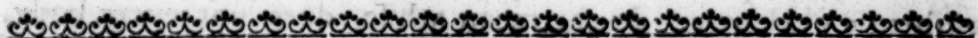
You observe, that “he mentions four exceptionable petitions then used by the preacher, as common to those of that way: and he concludes his detail of them with an *&c.* as if he had others yet in reserve for being commented upon,—if this first attempt of that sort, for ruining the Seceders, should prove unsuccessful.” I can assure you, my letter was not meant as “an attempt to ruin the Seceders.” Could it ever have entered into my mind, that their ruin could be brought about at so easy a rate? that is, by simply communicating to the readers of the Magazine, certain petitions and modes of expression used by their preachers in public prayers, and asking what they mean thereby, or in what sense they use them in their addresses to the Almighty. One main thing I had thereby in view, was my own information;—“not having been fully satisfied as to the determinate meaning and propriety of some or all of these phrases.”—Neither was it intended to comment upon, yea, not so much as to take notice of, any more of their petitions and modes of expression in prayer. But, since you have put this in my mind, I shall take the liberty of just naming other two or three; which, whether proper or improper, I suppose, for the most part, are peculiar to those of your way; such as,—“That the Lord would revive, in all ranks and degrees of persons in Britain and Ireland, a sense of the binding obligation of our solemn covenants upon posterity, and bring them back to their former covenanted allegiance to Zion’s King;” that is, the swearing of the solemn league;—“That he would bless a witnessing remnant of ministers and people,” or “witnessing courts and congregations,

“gations, in these lands;” meaning Antiburgher-Seceders only;—“That he would bless a summer-season of gospel-solemnities,” that is, sacramental occasions; as if that salutary and important Christian institution, the Lord’s supper, were to be observed in the summer-season only. I hope, you will know some reason for not telling me, that you “cannot believe such modes of expression were ever heard out of the mouth of any Seceding preacher.” If you should not, I have my vouchers in readiness to produce, even printed acts of Synod, and other authentic evidences. In the mean while, does not every body, who is particularly acquainted with Seceders, know that most of these, and the others before mentioned, or others of a like import, are used by their preachers in prayer once or twice every Lord’s day? and also, that such stress is laid upon the use of them, that the omission of them has, in sundry instances, given no small offence to both ministers and people? Considering your long connection with that body, you must know, that the generality of both ministers and people will have it so. Those who are esteemed zealous Seceders, seem to glory much in having their worshipping assemblies distinguished from all those of other denominations, by such phrases and modes of expression; as if the blessed peculiarities of the gospel were not a sufficient discriminating badge of gospel-churches, without superadded ones of human device. Further, they seem to look upon the use of some such modes, as a peculiar test of the preacher’s orthodoxy, or of his soundness and heartiness in witnessing-work. For, however scripturally he should both preach and pray, if some such sounds and phrases be not uttered, either in the sermon or prayers, all is naught; at least, there is a very great and intolerable want. Without this superadded sauce, the doctrines of the cross of Christ do not seem to relish with them. I am sure, it would require a deal of effrontery to contradict me in this. This is so much the case, that although the great apostle of the Gentiles himself were to come preaching and praying among them; if he did not so far alter his dialect, and adopt certain modes of expression, which, for aught that appears to us, he never once used throughout the whole course of his faithful and laborious ministry;—it is not probable, that all his apostolical authority and heavenly revelations could protect him from their hard speeches and severe censures.

I shall only add: Would it not be fully as proper for the people of your way, to allow themselves to make use of their Christian liberty in the choice of other words in their prayers, as to tie themselves down to set forms and phrases of that sort? especially as few, if any of them, consist of words which the Holy Ghost any where expressly teacheth. If Seceders will not grant
this,

this, with what good grace can they cry down, yea swear down a book of common prayer? And moreover, might not petitions and modes of expression be substituted in the room of the above-mentioned so much beloved ones, which would rather be more easily understood, and convey more of a certain sound and determinate meaning? Seceders, if they please, may consider of this at their leisure.

I shall proceed no further at present; and am, Sir, *yours, &c.*



L E T T E R IV.

S I R,

THE art of writing is of eminent use in human and social life: for, by means hereof, absent friends can freely converse together upon any subject, whether “religious” or “political.” The nature of the thing requires, that my correspondence with you should be of the miscellaneous sort; neither wholly “on matters religious,” nor wholly “in matters political;” but partly both. — The petitions used by the preacher in prayer, render this necessary. Matters religious, being of all others most important and interesting, deserve the first place with us: and, therefore, I shall begin with matters of that sort. This method of procedure I am directed to by your own letter.

You go on to, what you reckon, a defence of the several petitions and modes of expression specified in my letter; and begin with the last of them, which, you observe, “is in a matter “wholly religious.” This is that which respects the distribution of the institutions of Christian worship into *more ordinary* and *more solemn*; and particularly, the classing of the Lord’s supper among the latter, as if it were but very seldom to be dispensed in Christian churches and congregations, — only once a-year or so.

But, before entering directly on this, you say, “I shall not “insist on the false account that he gives of the frequency of public fasting among the Seceders,—which he finds fault with.” This sentence, I own, surprised me not a little. The account I gave of this matter was: “I understand they usually observe about five public fasts in the year: besides, it may be, a sixth “upon any special occurrence.” —You see, I do not say, *precisely* such a number every year; but *usually about* such a number. This you, without any limitation or explication, call a false account. I wish you had been so good as to point out wherein the falsity of it lies.—Thus much, however, I am able to instruct, and make good by hundreds of witnesses, and other incontestable

intontestable evidences ;—That hitherto the Associate Synod has been in the constant use of appointing two public fasts in the year. It is true, I hear you prevailed with them, at their last meeting, to agree, so far to deviate from the laudable practice of this national church, in her best and purest times, as from henceforth to meet only once a-year, (and who can tell where such beginnings of deformation, or declension from the wonted zeal, diligence, and activity of the reforming and covenanting church of Scotland, may land ? Had the provincial synods of the present established church entered into such an agreement ; perhaps, it might have been represented by some, as a grievous step of defection) : whence one of these stated annual fasts will probably drop ; but, sure, that cannot affect the time past :—That the Associate Presbytery I had best access to know, has been in the practice of appointing another public fast, (if not precisely every year, yet for the most part so), to be observed in the several congregations under their inspection :—That the particular sessions and congregations I was most adjacent to, were wont statedly to observe another public fast about a month before the sacrament, commonly called *the monthly fast* ; and, perhaps, I could name the congregations or sessions, which to this day would not chuse to have the sacrament without that fast :—That all the sessions and congregations of that way I ever knew or heard of, statedly observed another public fast, or a day so called, on some day of the week immediately preceding the sacrament-sabbath,—which recurs yearly at least :—And that, over and above all these, a sixth has at times been observed in the congregations I was best acquainted with, *viz.* on any special occurrence, as covenanting, &c. Whether all the Associate presbyteries and congregations have been uniform in these observances, or not, I cannot with certainty say : for I never made it my business to get myself informed about them ; and I shall assert nothing, in point of fact, but what I can abundantly document. But whether in reality they have been thus uniform or not, is it not natural for one, who is not certified of the contrary, to take it for granted they would be so ? especially considering the strict uniformity, not only in doctrine, discipline, and government, but also in *worship*, covenanted, and sworn to among them ? Upon the whole ; what you have elsewhere declared concerning the long detail of historical affairs reduplicated upon in the Secession-bond, will, I am sure, equally hold in the present case ;—“ These are things public and notour, which cannot be “ reasonably called in question : ” and therefore I beg of you, to regard your own character and reputation, as one who is “ ordained a preacher, and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and “ verity,” so far as not to venture to tell me, or any others, that the above is a “ false account.”

I shall only add, neither is it strictly true, that in my letter "I find fault with said frequency of fasting among the Seceders." It is acknowledged, I am no great friend to a stated number of yearly fasts; though indeed, with some, that may have a shew of superior sanctity and zeal. For as it is generally agreed, that religious fasting is an extraordinary duty, to be performed upon some special occurrences or emergencies; I think, we ought not to tie ourselves down to a stated number of times, but should fast oftener or seldomer, as such emergencies fall out. But then, have I, in my letter, expressed any dissatisfaction with that frequency of public fasting, in itself and absolutely considered? or not rather in a comparative view only? that is, as compared and contrasted with the very great infrequency of the Lord's supper. Is it not in this comparative view only, that I make mention of these fasts at all? I appeal to the passage of the letter itself, where they are mentioned. And you may think with yourself, if you have offered to give any answer to either of the two queries there proposed.

Without taking up any more of your time at present, *I am, &c.*

L E T T E R V.

S I R,

I Shall now proceed to a further consideration of what you have thought proper to offer in defence of, or relative to the petition which "is in a matter wholly religious."

"What he chiefly takes occasion to handle upon this head," you add, "is another fault that he charges upon them [the Seceders],—an infrequency of the ordinance of our Lord's supper." The infrequency hereof I charge upon them, is once or at most twice a-year; which, it is acknowledged, I look upon as a fault. As to this, I proposed sundry queries: but of these you have not taken the least notice. Instead of doing so, you just throw out two or three random-sort of assertions; some of which, it is confessed, I do not well understand.

You do not find fault with the account given of the infrequency charged upon them: nor indeed could you do so with any sort of grace at all; it being a matter so universally known. The truth is, it is but very lately that ever it was oftener than once a-year in any Seceding congregation. To this day, there are but *two* or *three* or so, for aught I know, who have it *twice* a-year; and not so much as *one*, that ever I heard of, oftener. The annual solemnity is what those in your way seem most to delight in;—in imitation, it is likely, of the yearly feast of the pass-

over

over among the Jews*.—You was under no temptation to deny or extenuate this charge; because you “apprehend no difficulty “in defending the Seceders against it;” that is, as I take it, in defending the infrequency complained of. And it is very true, great abilities and undaunted resolution will surmount no small difficulties. Only, you are “not satisfied about the expediency “of handling such matters in a periodical and miscellaneous publication.” It is but reasonable, that you should be allowed your own way of making your defence. But truly I would be glad to see it, in whatever channel you may be pleased to send it forth; and so much the rather, because, if I mistake not, you will have the honour of being the first reformed divine, of any name at least, who has openly and directly appeared as an advocate for such a practice.

Having happened to charge a fault upon the Seceders, (which, I know, some will reckon the height of presumption), you, in your turn, charge another of a very hainous nature upon me: “And here,” say you, “he is not merely taking the field against “the Seceders, —but likewise against the church of Scotland in “all her periods; yea, I suppose, against all the churches of “the reformation.” Were you not such an one, this would tempt me to think, that you would rather take up with very indifferent company, than be found all alone. It is well known in what frightful colours you and your brethren can dress up the church of Scotland in her *present period*, (which must be included in *all her periods*), when it serves the purpose of promoting your scheme, and enlarging your boundaries. But now you think proper to avail yourself of her present practice, in a very seldom celebration of the Lord’s supper; that serving a turn at this time. I say, her *present practice*; partly, because her principles and standards on that head are widely different; yea, plainly in favour of a frequent observance of that important institution: —and partly, because there is ground to think, that church has more frequently observed it in some of her former periods, than she does in her present period †. If she practised according to her

* “The passover indeed was annual. God fixed it to that time; but “they had their daily sacrifices in the temple, which were types of “Christ, and remembrancers to them of what was in time to be exhibited. We have no ordinance settled by Christ in commemoration “of his death, but this only.—Christ’s death is to be every day fixed in our thoughts; and to help our weakness, there should be a “frequent representation of it to our senses, in such a way as Christ “has instituted, not as men may prescribe.” *Charnock’s Works*, vol. II. Where much more is to be met with in favour of frequent communion in the Lord’s supper.

† “In the old liturgy penned by Knox, with the allowance and
E 2 “approbation

her own prescriptions in her books of discipline, it should be dispensed four times a-year at least, in, what is called, the first reformation-period: and then, we learn from the acts of some of her general assemblies, that she was still endeavouring a greater frequency this way, in, what is called, the second reformation-period,—the well-known period between 1638 and 1650, which Seceders have taken up their standing upon; although indeed this valuable part of the aimed-at reformation of that period, it seems, they have not thought worth their while to take any notice of.

What all the churches of the reformation have, in point of principle, held on this head, I cannot pretend to say. But, I would ask,—have all or any of them, in their public confessions, directories, &c. declared against a frequency of the Lord's supper in general; or against a greater frequency thereof than once, or at most twice a-year, in particular? I am sure, the church of Scotland does not. Likewise, I remember, in the course of reading, to have seen passages quoted from some of the churches abroad, from which it would seem, they looked upon that ordinance as an usual part of the public worship and service of the Lord's day *. If all or any of the rest of the reformed churches have

“ approbation of the assembly, prefixed to the old version of the psalms
 “ in metre, page 116. he tells us,—the Lord's supper was then admitted
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 “ Lord's supper to be most excellent, which comes nearest the institution
 “ of our Lord, and the doctrine of the apostles about it.—Of this holy
 “ ly food therefore” (say they) “ we make *frequent use*; because by
 “ means of this memorial, beholding with the eyes of faith the death
 “ and blood of him that was crucified, and meditating upon our redemption,
 “ with a sensible relish of the celestial and a real foretaste
 “ of eternal life, we are refreshed with delight ineffable by this spiritual
 “ and enlivening repast of our inner man, and made to rejoice with
 “ joy unspeakable, for the life and immortality brought to light by the
 “ gospel; and indeed are altogether, with our souls, and all that is
 “ within us, poured forth and lost in praise and blessing for the so astonishing
 “ gift of Christ toward us.—After this manner we judge the
 “ work of holy assemblies should be carried on; that first of all the
 “ word of God should be daily published to the people, in a public
 “ place set apart for holy things; that the obscurer things in scripture
 “ should, by well-qualified persons, be opened and explained; that
 “ then

have declared as above, may it please you to point it out : and, if you cannot, how do you make it good, that, by finding fault with the great infrequency which obtains among Seceders, I take the field against all the churches of the reformation ? — And as to the point of practice, however deficient they may be, yea, however far some of them may fall short of their own publicly-professed principles on that head,—it is a question with me, (for I do not pretend to absolute certainty here), if at this day any of the churches called reformed, come so far behind in this respect, as the different denominations of Scotch Presbyterians do : — which some cannot help looking upon as fully as grievous a step of defection, as some other things which Seceders so loudly complain of in the established church. Does not the church of England herself, corrupt and gross as she is, far exceed them in this matter ? — It is well known, that some of the reformed, such as those of Geneva, practised it monthly *. And even then, they did not fully act up to principle, as is evident from the declared sentiments of their reformer already referred to ; for which, no doubt, candid allowances are to be made,—because of the then times and circumstances. And the same frequency has of a long time been practised among a very numerous body of the English dissenters.—Whether any of the reformed churches ever came the length of stately observing the Lord's supper as a part of

“ then the holy eucharist should be celebrated, to put the faith of believers in exercise ; — that fervent and constant prayer should be made for the wants and necessities of all.”

* “ As to the Calvinistical churches, they were generally framed on the same model ; the difference, as far as I can observe it by their acts, was this, that some practised the administration of the supper once a-month, as the church of Geneva ;—which example the dissenters from the church of England have generally followed.” *Letter from a minister of the church of Scotland, &c.* p. 33.—“ From the form of dispensing the sacraments, composed by Calvin for the use of the church of Geneva, it appears, that the Lord's day preeding, intimation was made to the people, that they might prepare for that holy ordinance ; and that strangers, who inclined to communicate, might converse with the minister. On the sacrament-day, the minister, at the end of the sermon, explained the design of that ordinance, and how it ought to be received ; or, if he judged it necessary, spent his whole sermon on that subject. How often in the year the sacrament was dispensed, is not there mentioned ; but from Calvin's zeal to revive even weekly communicating, it is probable it was at least once a-month : especially as Calvin approved the book of common order of the English church at Geneva, where Knox was minister ; which book takes notice, that the Lord's supper was commonly used by them once a-month, or so oft as the congregation think expedient.” *Dr Erskine's dissertations*, p. 275.

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their church worship and service on the Sabbath-day, I cannot, upon sufficient evidence, say ; and therefore will not affirm it : but that some of them might have done so, in full consistency with their public declarations and professed principles, I am abundantly satisfied. It is plain, our first reformers were no advocates for a yearly sacrament. No : that they have left unto reformers of later date, to contend for.

But supposing the worst for me, namely, that such frequency, as every first day of the week, was never practised in any of the first reformed churches ; will it follow, that therefore it ought never to be so in the churches of Christ in any time coming ? or that there never ought to be a greater frequency, than once or twice a-year ? which is the infrequency complained of. Did our first reformers from Popery (who indeed were honoured with being the happy instruments of beginning, and so far carrying on a great and glorious work) arrive at the *ne plus ultra* or utmost limit of perfection, as to the reformation of evangelical churches ?—purging out whatever was amiss, and setting in order whatever was wanting. Certainly Seceders will not say this ; because they themselves have gone beyond them in several things. With plain, humble Christians, who have no party or selfish ends to reach, one would think, the question here should not be, How long may we indulge ourselves in the neglect of this so edifying ordinance ?—but rather, How frequent may we be in the observance of it,—in commemorating and remembering that blessed de- cease, which is the sole ground of our hope for eternity and a future state ? How frequently will the command of Christ enjoin- ing,—the scripture-account of the nature, ends, and uses of it,—the approved practice of the first Christians, &c. * warrant, authorise, and bear us out herein ? Would not greater frequen- cy this way, through the divine blessing accompanying the same, tend much unto the honour of Christ, and the spiritual good and edification of his churches on earth ?

And here it may be observed, that I never remember to have met with a sensible candid writer on this subject, but readily

* “ Whatever difficulty there may be in finding an express pre-
“ cept” (viz. for every first day of the week-communicating), “ the
“ apostolical example, which is as binding as a precept, is so clear
“ and obvious, that he who runs may read it. And to me it seems
“ something strange, that those who suppose the apostolical practice suf-
“ ficient to change the Sabbath from that day on which God, in the
“ fourth commandment, had enjoined it to be kept, should pay so
“ small regard to it in this instance, where it alters no command moral
“ or positive, but serves to clear up a material circumstance in observing
“ a precept which otherwise might seem indeterminate.” *Dr Erskine's*
dissertations, p. 254.

granted,

granted, that it was the constant practice of the churches planted, or inspected and directed by the apostles in person, in their church meetings and assemblies on the first day of the week, to commemorate their Lord's death in the ordinance of the supper; and also, that this was the practice of the primitive churches, in all places of the world, for some hundreds of years after the apostles, as their circumstances would admit *. Thus far were they from singling out the ordinance of the supper, and setting it at such a vast distance, in point of observance, from the other ordinances of the gospel, as is generally done now-a-days.—The first Christians came together on the first day of the week *to break bread*, Acts xx. 7. The manner of expression there would seem to intimate, that the breaking of bread was one main end of their coming together on that day. They had no notion of its being a yearly task, or annual solemnity; but rather looked upon it as a special part of the sanctification of the first day of the week sabbath, that blessed weekly memorial of a now-finished redemption. And herein, no doubt, they judged right: for if

* “ I might add, it is plain, from Socrates' and Sozomenes' church-histories, that *weekly communions* were generally kept up till the year 450. Socrates, however, tells us of two exceptions:—“ Where-as,” says he, “ all churches through the world, on the Sabbath day, in every revolution of the week, celebrate the mysteries, they of Alexandria, and they of Rome, on a certain ancient tradition, have refused to do it.” Probably the church of Rome was principal, that of Alexandria only accessory, in this peculiarity: for Alexandria drawing considerable sums of money from Rome, for the corn with which she furnished that city, might the easier be led to imitate the Roman customs. However, others too soon followed their pattern. We see then to what we owe the neglect of weekly communions, even to the pretended traditions of the church of Rome. —It was, then, the church of Rome which introduced seldom communicating; for which, as for all their innovations, they pretended an ancient tradition; and by which they alleged mens reverence for that ordinance would be heightened. And indeed so it was, till veneration gradually increasing, at length produced adoration, and the blasphemous absurdity of a wafer god. A striking instance, how dangerous it is for Christians to pretend to secure reverence to the institutions of their Lord, by methods different from those which he himself has appointed; and that it is our only safety to adhere to the plan delivered us in the writings and practice of those who were under the infallible guidance of the Spirit, without turning aside to the right hand, or to the left. If we do otherwise, how prudent soever our measures may seem, and however pious our intentions may really be, we have in so far rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom can there be in us?” *Dr Erskine's dissertations*, p. 270. 271.

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our redemption as to purchase was finished by the death of Christ, whereof indeed God hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead ; and if the Sabbath-keeping which now remains for the people of God,—the first day of the week Sabbath, be in commemoration of that finished redemption, together with the spiritual and eternal rest which ensues thereon ; is it not highly proper, that the Lord's supper, which is specially intended for commemorating his death, whereby our redemption was finished, should be observed as a part of that Sabbath-keeping, or of the church's worship and service on that day,—so far as the circumstances of particular congregations will admit ? —And if so, what would be the harm of churches at this day making nearer approaches to the first churches herein ? Would this be any disparagement to the reformation itself, or the memory of the worthy persons who were made the instruments thereof ? Very far from it. For what was the professed end and design of that work, and the instruments thereof, according to the measure and degree of light God was pleased to give them ? was it not to bring the churches to a nearer conformity, in faith and practice, to the apostolic plan and pattern ? purging out what was amiss, and setting in order what was wanting : that thus they might become *followers* and imitators of the churches of God which in Judea once were in Christ Jesus, 1 Thess. ii. 14.—and which *continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers*, Acts ii. 42. If, therefore, in after times we should, in any points belonging to Christian faith or practice, arrive at farther degrees of conformity unto the apostolic churches, than was actually attained to in the first reformed churches ; this would be so far from depreciating the reformers, and the great work they had in hand, that it would rather be a laudable complying with and promoting of the same, in its true intent and design : for is not the apostolic plan and pattern of gospel-churches, as far as it can with certainty be gathered from their writings, to be the measure and standard of all church-reformations under the New Testament ?

But you have a very different view of this matter : and, indeed, the strangest view that ever I heard of any truly-christian man having. For, say you, “ the Seceders must be excused, if “ the awful caution with which the canon of scripture is concluded, should still deter them from such a principle,—as in one “ respect an evident adding unto, and in another respect an evident taking away from the word of God.” Here “ you reckon “ (if you reckon any thing at all to the present purpose) that” a frequent, at any rate an every first day of the week eating of the Lord's supper (for its being “ dispensed in as much of a stated and ordinary course as any other ordinance of divine wor-
“ ship,”

"ship,"—is yours, not mine) falls under that awful caution with which the canon of scripture is concluded, as in one respect an evident adding unto, &c. and consequently, that it incurs the dreadful denunciation of God's adding unto *those who do so the plagues that are written in this book*,—and of his taking away *their part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book*, Rev. xxii. 18. 19. This certainly is the plain and obvious meaning of your words. And thus, by one dash of your pen, (shocking thought!), you exclude from the holy city, and the privileges thereof, all the churches of Christ for the first three or four hundred years; it being, for aught I know, universally agreed, that they were in the practice of eating the Lord's supper on every first day of the week. However liberal you may be in throwing out hard sentences, anathemas, and excommunications, against the living, who cannot in all points follow with you; one would think, you would have been more tender of the dead, yea, (as to a great many of whom, I hope, it may be said), *the dead in Christ*, who, through faith and patience, are long ago inheriting the promises;—those blessed spirits of just men made perfect, who are at rest with Christ in glory, and altogether beyond the reach of your censures, the lash of your tongue or pen. I wish, you had been so good as to give some reasons of what you say on this head; or to shew, wherein a frequent eating of the holy supper of our Lord (though it were as frequent as every first day of the week) would in one respect be an evident adding unto, and in another an evident taking away from the word of God. This would have been doing a real kindness to such of your fellow-men, or fellow-christians, (if you will acknowledge them to be so), who may be labouring under such a damnable error, as you suppose and represent this to be. This, however, you have not thought proper to do; but have rested all upon your own *ipse dixit*, or bare assertion;—which, I know, will be enough with many.—But not to insist on this; I shall only ask, whether a frequent celebration of the Lord's supper in Christian churches and congregations; or the once a-year administration of it, in a stated connection with three days of mere human institution, so as *that* never takes place without the observance of *these* in conjunction therewith;—which of these two, I say, bears most evident marks of—in one respect adding unto, and in another respect taking away from the word of God? I only propose the question.—I perceive, indeed, the former way would not be so well calculated for propagating and supporting the Secession-scheme as the latter: for thus a number of stranger-ministers are needed to assist in the work; which, as people are generally fond of changes, draws out a greater number to hear, than usually attend public worship

in their meeting-houses. And then, the most zealous of the ministers, oft-times at least, take occasion with great warmth to preach up the binding obligation of the covenants upon all ranks of persons in Britain and Ireland, and the necessity of renewing them at this day, in the way and manner practised in the Secession; the awful corruption, apostasy, and backsliding of both church and state, particularly the church; together with the danger of continuing in her communion, and the necessity of coming over to their camp,—where a confident and exclusive boast is made of the Lord's work, cause, and testimony: which must make no small impression upon many.

I persuade myself, none will be so barefaced, as, in point of fact, to contradict what is here alleged: for the truth of it can be attested by hundreds, yea, thousands of witnesses*.

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* It just now strikes my mind, how the Seceders are keen anti-revolutioners;—and that therefore, no doubt, their peculiar attachment unto the seldom administration of the Lord's supper, and the shewy way of going about it,—the great number of ministers and sermons, and vast crowds of people from distant places,—is in imitation of their protesting ancestors, whose scheme they have adopted; and who, it seems, were very fond of these innovations. This hint, with regard to the protestors, I found upon the following paragraph of the fore-mentioned Dr Erskine's dissertations.—“The author of *Dan in Beer-sheba*, gives the following account of the matter, from two books printed at London, 1657, (viz. *Uldericus Veridicus, sive de statu ecclesiæ Scoticanæ*; and, *A true representation of the rise, progress, and state of the divisions in the church of Scotland*), both of them writ by public resolutioners. “The general assembly,” say they, “in the year 1645, did establish an order for preventing confusion in the celebration of the sacrament, with which the whole church were satisfied. Yet, since our divisions, our dissenting brethren have taken up a new and irregular way of dispensing the holy supper, whereby they have turned it, either into a theatrical pomp, or into the Popish error of *opus operatum*. It is but seldom they dispense this ordinance. But when it comes to be administered in a church where any of them is minister, even they who are in the remotest parts of the kingdom, being warned, flock to them.—“They have a great many ministers assisting them, six or seven, nay, sometimes double that number, whose congregations are generally left destitute of preaching that day. Every day of their meeting, viz. Saturday, the Lord's day, and Monday, (N. B. They had then no fast-days), many of these ministers do preach successively one after another; so that three or four, or sometimes more, do preach at their preparation, and as many on the Monday following. And on the Sabbath sometimes three or four preach before they go to the action, besides those who preach to the multitude of the people, who cannot be contained in the church. Never before were there so ma-

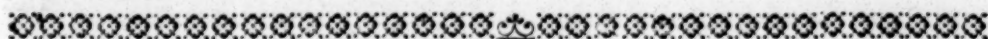
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As I have already enlarged too much upon this “matter wholly religious,” (a matter, in my view, of great importance unto the churches of the saints); I must now refer you to what has been written on this subject, by far abler hands of different denominations*; among whom are to be found some ministers of the

“ny sermons in any church in so short a time. These practices, as they are a clear violation of the order unanimously established in the church, and do occasion great animosity and alienation of simple people against those ministers who will not imitate those irregular courses; so uninterested observers perceive a clear design in all this, to set up themselves as the only zealous and pious people, worthy to be trusted and followed in our public differences: Which if it be not an injury to that sacred ordinance, and an improving that which should be a bond of unity and communion, to be a wedge to drive and fix a rent, let the judicious and sober judge.” —Possibly some of these reflections were too severe, and dictated by party-spirit; yet there is ground to think they were not wholly without foundation.” p. 282. 283.

* Seceders generally lay no small stress upon great names when they serve their purpose, or give their sanction unto the points they are zealously attached to, such as, the covenants, a national uniformity in religion without toleration, the civil magistrate’s power *circa sacra*, &c. If these were admitted to be of as much weight in the present argument, I am sure, plenty of them could easily be produced. I have already mentioned Calvin as a zealous advocate for the frequent administration and participation of the Lord’s supper. That great man handles this subject with a good deal of accuracy, in his Institutions, lib. IV. cap. 17. Where he urges frequent communicating from the design of the ordinance, and the practice of the apostolic and primitive church: and then adds, —“Doubtless, the custom of communicating only *once a-year*, is the invention of the devil, whoever was the instrument of introducing it.—Our practice ought to be very different. *Every week at least*, the Lord’s table should be set before the assembly of Christians, and the promises upon which they should feed there opened up to them. None indeed should be compelled to it; but all should be exhorted and encouraged.”—Charnock has also been mentioned to the same purpose. But why should I go into instances here? Might I not rather say, Where almost is the great name, either among the primitive fathers, or the reformers and reformed divines, that does not, for aught I know, offer itself a volunteer in this service?—After all, however, I think, our faith and practice, in this matter, should go upon, and be influenced by the command of Christ, and the approved practice of the apostolic churches; that so therein we may be the servants of Christ, and not of men. At the same time, we should certainly keep in view the obvious nature, ends, and uses of that Christian institution; all which call aloud for the frequent observance thereof. Have not Christians frequent need of being reminded of the death and dying love of their blessed Redeemer,—which indeed is the

the established church yet alive * ; who therefore, I hope, will not be suspected “ of harmony with a modern denomination of “ people, to whom Presbyterian principles are much the same as “ the Israelitish sacrifices were to the Egyptians, — an abomina- “ tion.” And so I shall conclude at present ; and am, &c.



L E T T E R VI.

S I R,

WE are generally fond of variety : and therefore, from a *matter wholly religious*, I shall now make a transition to *matters somewhat political*. To this subject I am of course led by the preacher and you ; for, say you, “ the other three peti- “ tions which he mentions, are in *matters somewhat political*.” And here I must greatly presume upon your candor. Though I should neither think nor write of these matters with justness and propriety, it is hoped, you will make candid allowances : for, I

the great end and design of that ordinance ;—and also, of the spiritual meat and drink, even the flesh and blood of Christ therein signified and represented, for a repast to their inner man ? Compare John vi. 48. to 58. with the words of institution,—*Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you :—this cup is the new covenant in my blood, drink ye all of it : This do in remembrance of me. For as often, &c.*

* Besides the two gentlemen already referred to, viz. Dr Erskine, and the author of the letter, generally said to be Mr Randall ; the mind of a considerable body of the ministers of the national church on the head of frequent communicating, may not obscurely be gathered from the overture of the Synod of Glasgow and Air, October 5. 1748. How, or for what reasons that overture was laid aside, I know not.—I dare say, the managers themselves must be very sensible, that even the frequency over- tured fell far short of the pattern,—“ the word of God, the a- “ postolic practice recorded therein, the practice of the primitive “ church.” But it is probable, they found their circumstances barred them up from attempting then to carry the matter higher. Defec- tive, however, as this overture was, for all the noise Seceders have made concerning public or national reformation, I never remember to have heard of such an attempt among them for moving one step nearer the apostolic and primitive practice, in this matter which so nearly con- cerns the churches of the saints. Indeed, it is not reformation in things of that kind that they seem to have most at heart.—In this connection, I shall also instance in two late ministers of that church, who declared warmly in favour of frequent communicating, namely, Mr Daniel Campbell, and Mr Willison ;—who nevertheless could not well be ac- cused “ of harmony with a modern denomination of people, to whom “ Presbyterian principles are much the same as the Israelitish sacrifices “ were to the Egyptians,—an abomination.”

assure

assure you, I have never been in the practice of studying politics ; but have left them to the politicians and political heads of the age. In my whole life, I never thought so much of matters of that sort, till of late, some how or other, it came into my mind, agreeably to your own salutary hint, to *be at more pains to know what the Seceders are*. The best way, it was apprehended, of coming at the true knowledge of them, would be to read their standard-books, with some other of their most approved authors : which accordingly I did. And there I found a strange mass of *matters somewhat political* ; or of parliamentary acts and proceedings in different ages and periods. Whence, one would think, those of your way must needs be great adepts in matters of that kind. Neither did I rest here ; but was still “ at more pains to know what they are.” For I procured a collection of parliamentary laws and statutes, in order to see with my own eyes such of the acts as are not quoted at large, but, for brevity’s sake, only referred to, in their books. Moreover, I also read some history, particularly relative to that covenanting period which they sit down upon as their ground-work, and the political proceedings or managements thereof. Whence, I flatter myself, I have acquired a little more knowledge of *matters somewhat political*, and of *what the Seceders are* : although, indeed, it is very probable, not yet so much by far as I would stand in need of. Permit me, therefore, to open my mind freely to you upon the place which these matters have in their scheme. Such a place do they hold therein, that they would seem to be *the very foundation of your testimony*. If you will not believe me as to this, ask your good friend, Mr Moncrieff, who, I suppose, will not hesitate to tell you much the same thing. Which, I own, is no great recommendation of it to me. Strange ! a religious testimony, a testimony which pretends to be the testimony of Jesus, built upon the foundation of state acts and proceedings. Why not rather upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone ? And, if these, fundries of which are of the nature of penal laws, be the foundation of your testimony ; what would the superstructure be, if you had it in your power, or if the civil government would take you by the hand ?—I find no manner of fault with your clergy or people for being well acquainted with “ matters somewhat political.” But I am not at all clear with respect to having a testimony which pretends to be the testimony of Jesus, and is said to be lifted up for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of his house, — or an oath and covenant concerning the holy Christian profession, and which is made the ground and foundation of all church union and communion among the disciples of Christ,—so stuffed and filled up with those matters.

What !

What ! cannot the Christian profession, with all the appurtenances and concerns thereof, be well enough collected and laid out from the Bible, wherein are contained the doctrines and laws of the kingdom of heaven, without such a multiplicity of references to the records of parliament, or the statute-book of an earthly kingdom ? But yet so it is, that parliamentary acts and proceedings are so twisted and interwoven with the public profession of Seceders, in their testimony, act for renewing the covenants, &c.—that persons, however mighty in the scriptures, cannot be due proficients in that profession, unless at the same time they be mighty in the laws of the land, or a great many acts of the Scotch parliament ; particularly, the acts passed in the period between 1638 and 1650, which are homologated and approved ; those in the period between the restoration and the revolution, which are testified against and abjured ; and a good many at and after the revolution, which are likewise engaged to be contended against.—How does this comport with the spirituality and original simplicity of the Christian religion ? Does not this interweaving make the public profession of Seceders to bear a very different face from what the Christian profession doth, as stated and laid out by our Lord and his apostles, in the New Testament ? I do not wonder though this very consideration, or such human interweavings and mixtures along with the Christian profession, should be a mighty bar in the way of thinking people's acceding to the judicial testimony, and joining in the bond.

Here I am reminded of a late well-known controversy, which was very keenly handled among the Seceders, and wherein you yourself, I suppose, had no small share,—that relative to the religious clause in some burghers-oaths. In the managing of this controversy, the strangest use came to be made of acts of parliament, that, perhaps, was ever heard of in any dispute or controversy, which pretended to be a religious one,—inasmuch that the appeal of the contending parties was almost an hundred times unto the laws of the land, for once unto the laws of the kingdom of heaven ; as appears from their publications on that head *. So that whoever was to dip into that controversy, it behoved him to be furnished with a large collection of parliamentary acts and deeds, and to labour hard therein. Hereof the managers were so sensible, that the Scots laws respecting religion, all along from the reformation until after the revolution, were

* “ Where shall the public profession of religion in a land be evidenced, or by what criterion or document can it be proven better, than by the public standing laws of the land, describing what the true religion is which they profess ? &c.” *Mr R. Erskine's lawfulness of the religious clause*, &c. p. 13.—Strange reasoning for a Christian divine !

selected and published; that so the people might have access to peruse them *. And indeed, if they were well skilled in these, in that debate they seem to have had little or no use for the holy scriptures, which are *able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, 2 Tim. iii. 17.—And not only was this the case in their printed books and pamphlets, but I have been informed by Seceders, that then it was usual for the poor people to be entertained with harangues of that sort from pulpits and tents, on Lord's days, and other occasions, particularly sacrament-times, when present controversies, whether they be in "matters wholly religious," or "matters somewhat political," use to be much insisted upon. Whether that was feeding the people with the sincere and unmixed milk of the word, or not,—I shall leave with others to judge. Some have not been able to help thinking, that, perhaps, never were a Christian people more abused (at least, where the scriptures were, in words, held to be the *only* rule, in all points belonging to faith and practice,) than those of the Secession were in that matter. Strange was the labyrinth poor simple people were led into by the management of that controversy: surprising were the things unto which the heat of their religious zeal was turned, and upon which it was spent. When I look into some of the books wrote by the actors, I know not what to think. Although indeed, at the same time, I cannot but entertain the charitable thought of them, that it was through mistake, rather than design, they acted such a part. Sundry considerations strongly incline me so to think of

* "As an inquiry into the settlement and state of religion, at and since the revolution, can only be made by looking into the act of parliament, June 7. 1690, and after acts respecting religion, made since that time; and as few people have access unto acts of parliament; so, unless some essays of this kind be published, the generality of people must remain in the dark as to that settlement of religion then made, and are in danger of being farther bewildered and turned aside from the Lord's cause and testimony, by those absurd assertions published in the pamphlet [Mr Ralph Erskine's *Fancy no Faith*] here animadverted upon, and by those who have turned aside from the testimony, and are indefatigable in seducing their brethren, by propagating this author's new scheme. The acts of assemblies and parliaments passed in the second reforming period, which I have quoted in this essay, are to be found in the collection of Confessions, printed annis 1725 and 1739.—The acts of parliament passed since the revolution, and here quoted, I took from a copy published by authority."—*A vindication of the judicial testimony.*—By William Campbell minister of the gospel to the Associate congregation in the east of Fife, p. 3. 4.—A book which abounds "in matters somewhat political." And besides pamphlets of that sort, a summary of these laws by themselves was also published.

some

some of them at least.—But, whatever should be in that, this taken in conjunction with sundry other things, is certainly a strong ground of suspicion, that, what may be called, the public state of the Secession-testimony, proceeds upon some mistake or other; particularly, some mistake relative to the true spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, and its distinction from the kingdoms of this world.

Without any more at present, I am, &c.

L E T T E R VII.

S I R,

THE preachers of your way using so many *petitions in matters somewhat political*,—will bear me out in giving you two or three *letters* on matters of that sort.

You have observed, that “*the other three petitions which I mention, are upon such matters.*”—From the Answers to Mr Nairn, and otherwise, I perceive you are a syllogistical reasoner; and therefore I will give you this conclusion from your own premisses:—Ergo, the *covenanted reformation itself*, so much preached and prayed up by Seceders, is *a matter somewhat political*. You cannot allege, that “*gross injury is done to you*” by this conclusion. It is not deduced by *a long train of logical reasoning*, (a method which some churchmen, you know, have at times thought proper to betake themselves unto, for fixing heresies upon those they meant to represent unto the people in heretical colours); but by a just and necessary consequence. Which will appear thus:—If *specials* are contained in their *generals*, and *parts* in their *whole*; then the *covenanted reformation itself* is *a matter somewhat political*: but the former is true: therefore, the latter. The antecedent of the proposition cannot be denied. The *nexus* or consequence, is proved thus:—“The other *three petitions* which he mentions, are in *matters somewhat political*:” but the *petition* for reviving, and bringing into repute, the *covenanted reformation itself*, is one of these *other three*: therefore, that petition is “in a matter somewhat political:” or, which is the same, *the covenanted reformation itself* is *such a matter*. Thus, then, the covenanted reformation itself, contended for by Seceders, what ever it should be as to its *species*, as to its *genus*, is *a matter somewhat political*. And indeed, for aught that I can learn from your letter, this is the most of the account you have given of it; which truly does not recommend it a great deal to me.—So much for logics.

If the matters in question really be political, what a pity is it, that

that ever such a bustle should have been made about them, in some places of the world called Christian;—that ever they should have been so much written, preached, and prayed up, as part of the Christian religion;—yea, made the ground of severe sentences, and solemn excommunications? Glad shall I be, if those of your way come at length to see the folly and impropriety of blending matters political with matters religious,—with the peculiar affairs and concernments of the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, and intermeddles not with matters political; but leaves them to the politicians of this world. In this case, I hope, they will see cause for leaving out some parts of their complex scheme, particularly such as respect the civil constitution of Great Britain.

“And his commentary upon them,” say you, “is plainly calculated for rendering the Seceders obnoxious in civil society.” I can sincerely declare, I had no design of rendering the Seceders obnoxious in civil society; nor should I ever wish to see them suppressed by civil authority. I would not wish to see any people so suppressed, merely on religious accounts, or points of conscience, who behaved themselves as good and peaceable subjects; much less, the Seceders, among whom, it is hoped, there are not a few good and valuable Christians,—however much they may be misled or mistaken “in matters somewhat political.” But, at the same time, my heart’s desire and prayer unto God is, that no men of anti-toleration-principles;—none who contend for the annexing of all civil and military offices unto the covenants, or that the swearing of these covenants ought still to be the badge of loyalty to the sovereign;—I heartily wish, that none such may ever have much influence in civil society, or any direct and immediate countenance from the civil authority: for it is easy to see what would be the dismal consequences thereof, even with regard to civil society itself. The woful experience of past ages lets us see, what we might expect, if ever this should happen.—Strange! what a catastrophe would ensue, before the civil and military state of Great Britain could be got framed and modelled according to the tenor of the Secession-testimony! the ends whereof, it is plain, can never be fully reached, until all the British magistrates, judges, and officers of whatever rank or quality, swear the covenants, and hold their places and posts upon that express condition;—as, beside other considerations, is clear from their warm espousal of the Protestors scheme, in opposition to the public resolutions,—the act of classes, act for keeping the judicatories and places of trust free of corruption, &c. *Test. p. 19.*—Beside many other unhappy consequences which, in all appearance, would follow hereupon,—we would be deprived of one of the mildest and best of earthly sovereigns, that ever, perhaps,

ruled a people; unless he were disposed, not only to swear the solemn league himself, but also give the royal assent unto all the severe acts of parliament passed in the solemn-league period for enjoining and imposing the same upon the subjects: For Seceders declare it to be a ground and cause of the Lord's wrath, that "the body politic, particularly in Scotland, have never, by
 " their deed of civil constitution, provided that their magistrates
 " should be brought under, and admitted upon obligations and
 " terms, such as were fixed upon and established in reforming
 " periods, particularly in *anno* 1649. *Answers to Mr Nairn, &c.* p. 51. For the better understanding of those terms, upon which they would have our magistrates, particularly the King as supreme, admitted;—it will be necessary to turn over unto act 15. of the second session of the second triennial parliament holden at Edinburgh, 1649,—which "enacts, ordains, and declares,
 " That before the King's Majesty who now is, or any of his successors, shall be admitted to the exercise of his royal power,
 " he shall assure and declare, by his solemn oath under his hand
 " and seal, his allowance of the national covenant, and of the
 " solemn league and covenant, and obligation to prosecute the
 " ends thereof in his station and calling; and [N. B.] *that he*
 " *shall, for himself and his successors, consent and agree to acts of*
 " *parliament enjoining the solemn league and covenant,*" &c. This act Seceders are so full of, that they do not merely refer to it with approbation, but quote it at large, both in their judicial testimony, p. 19. and fore said *Answers*, p. 48. 49.; and call it,
 " the deed of civil constitution farther reformed;—which they
 " desire with thankfulness to commemorate, and bear witness
 " unto," *ib.* And moreover, at this rate, none could be deemed good and loyal subjects, but must be liable unto all the pains of law, on the head of disloyalty, who are not clear to swallow down every article of the solemn league, and, in every point, conform to the religious uniformity therein covenanted: for Seceders expressly, yea upon oath, testify against the revolution-parliament, for "imposing a general oath of allegiance unto the
 " sovereign, instead of our covenant-allegiance, which was judged a proper badge of loyalty in our reforming periods," *Test.* p. 42. *Act for renewing the covenants*, p. 101. Which, if it has any meaning at all, certainly denotes, that the swearing of the covenants ought still to be made the badge of loyalty to the sovereign. But I need not insist upon this; and so much the rather, as, I hope, the wisdom of the British legislature, and their regard for the public weal, will direct them always to keep men of such principles, however high their pretensions in religion may run, at a due distance.

"The meaning of those petitions which he questions about,"

say

say you, "is plainly set forth as the only meaning they can bear." You will observe, I just ask, what the meaning of these petitions is? or if such a thing be the meaning of them? and then, if the meaning questioned about be not satisfactory to me, I, in a catechetical way, give some reasons why it is not so. But do I not, at the same time, leave full liberty to Seceders to chuse their own meaning? — to chuse another meaning, if that in question does not please them? — You refuse, yea pretend, the utmost abhorrence at the meaning fixed upon them in my queries: but then, for aught that I can learn from your letter, you substitute no other in the room thereof. So that these petitions, or others of the same import, which are constantly put up in the worshipping assemblies of Seceders, seem to be left as mere sounds without a sense, words without any fixed and determinate meaning at all. Whence, every one is left at full liberty to use and understand them in whatever sense he pleases; — in different, yea, it may be, opposite senses. And indeed, this latitude or unfixedness of meaning, I readily perceive, may be of singular use, as a sort of salvo to the consciences of some clergymen yet in conjunction with the Associate Synod; even as the same or a like device, fallen upon by the renowned Archbishop Laud, and other great names of later date, has been of eminent use this way in the church of England; insomuch that, by means thereof, clergymen of very different, yea opposite religious sentiments, such as, Athanasians and Arians, Calvinists and Arminians, &c. have come to be in case to subscribe the same articles of religion. — But though you should not use these petitions in the sense implied or fixed upon in my letter, (and indeed who can tell in what sense you use them, until you be pleased to explain the same?), it will not thence follow, that therefore no Seceders, or Seceding preachers do so; especially as "I have some reasons" "for suspecting, that" several of them have very different sentiments from those expressed or implied in yours, as to some things, particularly the civil magistrate's power *circa sacra*, and things of that kind. — But, after all your elaborate efforts to disprove and set aside the meaning fixed upon in my letter; the more closely I attend to this matter, the more I am inclined to think, that it is (I shall not say, "the *only* meaning they *can* "bear," but) *a meaning* that they can very well bear; unless Seceders have now dropt, and fallen from some very material parts of their scheme, as contained in their hitherto publicly-avowed standards. And as yet I have never seen, or heard of the least synodical evidence of any such thing; nay, some of their late deeds and decisions, done with your own concurrence, seem evidently to demonstrate the contrary.

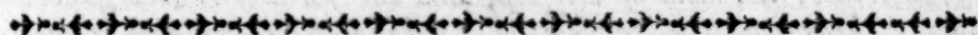
"The first of these petitions (*viz.* in matters somewhat politi-

“cal) is,—“That the Lord would revive, and bring into repute, “a covenanted work of reformation.” “And,” say you, “he “proposes this question upon it,—“What is meant by the co- “venanted reformation itself?” And now I will propose another,—Have you given any candid, pertinent, and satisfactory answer to “this question?” You have indeed told us, that it is “a matter somewhat political:” but, to me at least, that does not cast much light upon it. One of the readers of the Magazine, in a letter to his friend, which I happened to see, takes the import of your answer to “this question” to be, as if you had said,—“The covenanted reformation is the covenanted reformation; a nameless something, which the less it is understood, the more it will be revered and held in estimation.” But far be it from me to say, that this gentleman’s opinion is just.

I cannot help observing, that, in my view, you are not altogether candid in the use which you here make of the Solemn Warning, (which, I have heard, was wholly of your own framing and manufacturing, although indeed it came at length to obtain the sanction of Synod): for thus you would seem to insinuate, that by “those tares which Satan was busy in sowing, “and that fire of melancholy disorders which he was busy in “blowing up,” in the period between 1638 and 1650,—the Synod meant the civil pains and compulsory methods then applied toward promoting the covenanted reformation or uniformity. But whatever your own private judgment in the framing and voting of this part of the Warning may have been, this could never be the public judgment of the court, unless they meant to contradict themselves; having elsewhere, in the most explicit manner, and without any particular exception that ever I could observe, declared their hearty approbation of the acts and proceedings of both church and state in that period, in so far as they were in favour of the covenanted reformation and uniformity: which I may have occasion more fully to explain afterwards. If, therefore, we shall suppose the Associate Synod to be acting consistently with themselves, must we not rather think, that by said “tares and melancholy disorders,” they meant “the desperate “issue to which the Sectarian party at length pushed matters, the “flood of errors and delusions which thereupon overflowed,” and the like? See *Warning*, p. 22.—Here, by the by, I shall take occasion to observe, that by “the desperate issue to which “the Sectarian party at length pushed matters,” I suppose, you mean the beheading of King Charles I. And I am not sure, if even that will be found to be a breach of the solemn league and covenant, or much contrary to the true spirit, meaning, and intent of it: At least, I have sometimes thought, that, in a way
of

of faithfully prosecuting and following out the solemn league, it would not be easy to answer some of Cromwell's pleas and reasonings. For, said he, the covenant only binds "to preserve and defend the King's Majesty's person and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion, and liberties of the kingdom," art. 3. But could the covenanters themselves say, that K. Charles I. was then defending the true religion, and liberties of the kingdom? Again, the covenant binds, "with all faithfulness to endeavour the bringing unto condign punishment, all such as have been, or shall be malignant and hinderers of the reformation of religion,—contrary to this league," art. 4. And how, reasoned he, could this part of the covenant be fulfilled, if the King, who was the ringleader and chief of such malignant and hinderers, should be allowed to pass with impunity?

But I must now, for a time, take off my attention from "matters somewhat political;" and so shall conclude, signifying, that I am, &c.



L E T T E R VIII.

S I R,

FOR some days past, my attention has necessarily been called off from "matters somewhat political," unto matters of another kind, which is one reason of your being so long of hearing from me. For, however much bulk these matters bear in the religious creed, or profession of Seceders, I hope, you will agree with me in this, that they should not too much ingross our thoughts; especially as they tend very little to the use of edifying. They are very sapless topics for Christians to dwell much upon; little, or nothing at all of soul nourishment, or refreshment, is to be met with in them. Whence, I have been many times surprised, that serious exercised souls should take so much pleasure in the judicial testimony, or even the solemn league itself; which abound in matters of that sort.—The nature of my correspondence with you, however, obliges me to resume, and further enlarge upon these things.

For the better finding out of what Seceders mean by the covenanted reformation itself, which they lay so great stress upon, I asked,—"*Is it the solemn-league reformation and uniformity, so warmly espoused and contended for by Seceders?*" And then, by way of explanation, I added, *an external uniformity in one system of doctrines, one mode of worship, and one form of church-government, throughout the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, to be brought about by the interposition of parliamentary power*

power and civil pains, without the least toleration or indulgence to such as might scruple at any part of said uniformity. "The charging this meaning of it upon the Seceders," say you, "is doing them gross injury. "This is indeed," continue you, "a most hideous representation of the Seceders. But what reason have they given for it? They have no secret principles, they publish all to the world; and there is not a syllable of all their publications to such a purpose, but much to the very reverse: It is hard then, to have such a charge against them, wrested out of some general expressions in their prayers." Extremely hard, I grant, if, as you say, there be no other ground for it. But then, this is the thing in question.—I persuade myself, you will "know some reason of prudence, fear, or shame," for not refusing, that the *solemn-league reformation and uniformity*, be what it will, is warmly espoused and contended for by Seceders; and that this is what they mean by *the covenanted reformation itself*; and also, that the reformation and uniformity covenanted in said league, is *an external uniformity in one system of doctrines, one mode of worship, and one form of church-government, throughout the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland*.—Thus far, then, there can be no *hideous*, yea, *no unfair representation of the Seceders*; or their words must be divested of all meaning whatever. This is so obvious, that it need not be enlarged upon: For it is self evident, that what is driven in the solemn league, and consequently what Seceders are witnessing and contending for, is a *national scheme, a national reformation and uniformity as such*; inasmuch that the ends of their testimony can never be attained, until the *whole nation*, yea, *the whole three nations as such*, and in their *national capacity*, (including all the different ranks, orders, and degrees of men belonging to the civil and military state of Britain and Ireland), be brought over to adopt the solemn-league scheme of religion and church-government; which, some cannot help apprehending, they will never be able to effectuate, without the aid of the secular arm, the interposition of parliamentary power and civil pains.—Where then does the supposed hideousness of my representation of the Seceders, on this head, lie? Is it in the following clause? "to be brought about by the *interposition of parliamentary power and civil pains, without the least toleration or indulgence to such as might scruple at any part of said uniformity*." I profess, that hitherto I understood the solemn-league uniformity to be such as is here represented; and, I suppose, the most of other people have done so too;—at least, there would seem to be very great ground for so doing. For,

1. Did not the first projectors and promoters of the league, who must be allowed to be the best judges of its true meaning and

and intent, understand it in this sense? And agreeably thereto, did they not make use of the foresaid ways and means, that is, parliamentary power and civil pains, for prosecuting the ends of it, or bringing about the uniformity therein covenanted? Did they not, both in England and Scotland, insist upon the use-making of, yea, and in so far actually use the engines of this world, the encouragements and discouragements of the worldly kingdom, for enforcing and promoting the same? Moreover, did not both Scotch and English Presbyterians agree, in a most hideous outcry against the English parliament, as guilty of breach of covenant, because they were not disposed to go all the lengths they would have had them, in exercising severities upon such as could not in conscience conform to some parts of said uniformity? If these interrogatories should be answered in the negative; I hope, I will be able to produce sufficient historical evidence of the affirmative. Some instances to this purpose may occur afterwards: At present, therefore, I shall only give this short specimen.—When, in pursuance of the solemn league, the directory for public worship was compiled and agreed to, it, as well as the other branches of the uniformity, was imposed by the parliaments of both kingdoms; particularly in England, it was imposed under certain mulcts, and other penalties. An ordinance of parliament, August 25. 1645, discharges the use of the book of Common Prayer, in any church, chapel, or place of public worship, or in any private place or family, under the penalty of five pounds for the first offence, ten for the second, and for the third an year's imprisonment;—and also, enjoins the use of the directory in all exercises of public worship, on pain of forfeiting forty shillings;—and forbids printing, writing, or preaching any thing in derogation of it, on pain of forfeiting a sum of money, not under five pounds, nor exceeding fifty. Hard measures indeed!—And afterwards, when, in pursuance of the same, the form of Presbyterial church-government was agreed to, it was also imposed by the authority of parliament;—although it is true, that of England could not be prevailed with to settle the Presbyterial government, as *jure divino*, most of them having been of Erastian principles; neither were they hearty in using very hard measures with those who upon conscience could not, in all points, conform to it; as has already been hinted.—The ministers of the city and province of London, in their testimony, published *anno* 1647, warmly testify against “the error
“of toleration, as patronising and promoting all other errors
“and evils, under the grossly-abused notion of liberty of con-
“science.” They loudly complain of it, “as a very great
“grievance, that men should have liberty to worship God in
“that way and manner which to them appears most agreeable
“to

“ to the word of God; and no man be punished by authori-
 “ ty for the same;—and that an enforced uniformity through-
 “ out a nation or state should be thought to confound the ci-
 “ vil and religious.”—Yea, so high did the fast friends of the
 league carry matters this way, that in all their treaties with the
 King, even to that in the isle of Wight, (except when the army
 was in possession of the cities of London and Westminster,
 which cast a damp on their tyrannical and anti-toleration-spirits),
 one of the proposed articles of peace was, that an effectual
 course should be taken by act of parliament, and all other ways
 needful and expedient, for suppressing the opinions of the In-
 dependents, and all other Sectaries. That our covenanting an-
 cestors in Scotland prompted on the English Presbyterians unto,
 and supported them in those hard measures, “ the compulsory
 “ terms which they then stood upon,” with all those who dif-
 ferred from them in their views of religion and church-govern-
 ment, is abundantly evident from the remonstrances, letters, ad-
 monitions, warnings, &c. of both church and state in those
 days;—which, by the by, I suppose, are included among those
 “ contendings and wrestlings, declarations and testimonies,”
 &c. with approbation referred to by the Seceders, *Test. p. 20.*—
 And here it is worthy of our notice, that all the while, at least
 during, what is commonly called, the long parliament, there
 was not, for aught I know, any positive and express toleration
 in the English nation; but only a sort of winking and conniving
 at such as were scrupled in their consciences with some parts of
 the publicly-authorized church discipline and government.
 This was the true cause of the noisy clamour and uproar then
 made against toleration and liberty of conscience. But, I flat-
 ter myself, the above interrogatories will not be answered in the
 negative; especially, as you have given it under your hand, that,
 “ at the time of the reformation in the last century, some spe-
 “ cious remains of the leaven of that abomination,” viz. com-
 pulsory methods of dealing with men in matters of conscience
 (thus, you expressly call those “ Presbyterian principles, an ab-
 “ omation!”), had not been got entirely purged out.” And
 indeed, so far were they from being sought to be purged out,
 that they were rather held fast, avowed, and gloried in.—
 “ That the natural rights of conscience were not generally under-
 “ stood:” How highly has such an assertion as this from the
 mouths and pens of some others, displeased and provoked Seced-
 ers! I know not, if the sanction of your pen will now secure
 it from ever “ meeting with a syllable of contradiction from any
 “ of them.”—That the covenanters in those days “ stood up-
 “ on, and made application of principles of compulsion:”
 which indeed would seem to have been the main pillars of the
 solemn-

solemn-league scheme: at least, it is apprehended, thus much may be said in behalf of the understanding and good sense of our ancestors, that had they not maintained, and been disposed to reduce to practice, such principles, it is not probable, they would ever have dreamed of setting on foot, or attempting such a measure, as the driving of a rigid uniformity in religion, throughout three whole nations and kingdoms of this world. All such principles and methods, however, you, in your great modesty, candor, and softness of expression, have thought proper, for the honour of their memory, to pronounce—of diabolical projection.

But “it cannot be inferred from any principles of compulsion which the reformers then stood upon,” say you, “that they would have made the same application of these principles in such a period as the present, when people of different and opposite denominations in religion do agree in the common character of good and peaceable subjects of the civil state.” However your penetration may discover, what they would have done in the present period; that is too high for me. But, so far as history can be credited, I can tell you, that, in their own period, they were for “making the same application of those principles,” even as to “people who, though of different and opposite denominations in religion, yet did agree in the common character of good and peaceable subjects of the civil state;” yea, and that they reckoned themselves bound by the solemn league so to do. Beside what has been already hinted to this purpose,—the proceedings and conclusions of the Presbyterian divines, with reference to their Independent brethren, in the committee of accommodation appointed by the English parliament, put this beyond all doubt: whereof I beg leave to give but this one instance.—At the last meeting of this committee, the sub-committee of Presbyterian divines concluded their answer to the last paper of the Independents thus: “That whereas their brethren say, that uniformity ought to be urged no farther than is agreeable to mens consciences, and for their edification,—it seems to them as if their brethren not only desired liberty of conscience for themselves, but for all men, and would have us think, that we are bound by our covenant to bring the churches in the three kingdoms to no nearer a conjunction and uniformity, than is agreeable to the liberty of all mens consciences;—which, whether it be the *sense* of the covenant, we leave with the Honourable committee.” Whereupon Mr Burroughs, in the name of his Independent brethren, declared, “If their congregations might not be exempted from the coercive power of the classes; if they might not have liberty to govern themselves in their own way, as long as they behaved peaceably toward the civil magistrate;—they were resolved to suffer, or go to

“ some other place of the world, where they might enjoy their
 “ liberty. But while men think there is no other way of peace
 “ but by forcing all to be of the same mind ; while they think
 “ the civil sword is an ordinance of God to determine all con-
 “ troversies of divinity, and that it must be attended with fines
 “ and imprisonment to the disobedient ; while they apprehend
 “ there is no medium between a strict uniformity and a general
 “ confusion of all things : while these sentiments prevail, there
 “ must be a base subjection of mens consciences to slavery, a sup-
 “ pression of much truth, and great disturbances in the Christian
 “ world.” Thus, then, we see how the covenanters, and their
 adversaries also, in those days understood the league, and the u-
 niformity therein covenanted ; — that they understood it in the
 very precise light in which I have represented it. And it is
 strange, if you will venture to prefer your own judgment (pier-
 cing as it is) above theirs, in this matter ; that is, as to the true
 meaning of their own league and covenant, and the uniformity
 therein sworn to.—But this is not all : For,

2. Does not this view, or do not these methods of bringing a-
 bout and maintaining the uniformity covenanted, evidently enter
 into the very league itself, as part of the matter thereof? Whence,
 the use of such methods comes to make up part of the thing it-
 self-covenanted ; and, of consequence, is plainly homologated
 by the swearing or renewing of the covenant. And therefore to
 me it appears not altogether fair and honest, to pretend to disa-
 vow the compulsory methods, the carnal weapons and worldly
 sanctions, made use of by our ancestors for prosecuting the ends
 thereof, and all others of the same kind ; while, at the same
 time, the whole and every part of the subject-matter of the league
 itself is strenuously vindicated and defended, and the binding ob-
 ligation thereof upon posterity, without the least limitation or
 explication, with the greatest warmth written, preached, pray-
 ed, yea, sworn up. This, one would be almost tempted to sus-
 pect, was contrived as a blind for simple and unwary people.
 This being of great importance in the present argument, I beg
 leave to explain it more particularly.—Thus much would seem to
 be implied in the very idea of the solemn league as being strictly
national, or respecting and taking within its verge the whole
 kingdoms as such, or in their *national capacity*. Whence, in
 the very nature of the thing, it would not seem to be left to the
 free and voluntary choice of individuals, if they would swear it,
 and embrace the religious profession therein engaged unto, or
 not : No ; whether voluntary or involuntary, they must be
 brought unto it, by some means or other ;—or the end of it, as
 national, can never be reached. This view is not peculiar to me ;
 but is the same with that which the first projectors and promoters
 of

of it had ; as appears from what is above said : and therefore, at this time, I shall only add, that Mr Gillespie, one of the commissioners from the church of Scotland to the assembly of divines at Westminster, urges this very consideration for the English parliament's imposing that covenant upon all persons in their dominions, under *civil pains*. His own words are,—“ In the first article of treaty between the kingdoms, signed Nov. 29. 1643, it is agreed and concluded, that the covenant be sworn and subscribed by both kingdoms : not that it should be taken by *as many as will* in both kingdoms, but that it should be taken by *both kingdoms*. How shall this be performed, if it be still left *arbitrary* ? ”—Again, did not the parliaments of these kingdoms, in their *parliamentary capacity*, enter into the league, and bind themselves to act in that capacity, or exert the power and influence competent to them as parliaments, for bringing about the national reformation and uniformity covenanted ? And how could they exert the power and influence competent and peculiar to them as such, without enforcing said reformation and uniformity with worldly sanctions ? This was so well understood in those days, that the just-now mentioned renowned person urged this consideration also, as an argument for the English parliament's imposing the solemn league, as above, in these words :—“ All who take the solemn league and covenant, are obliged, in their several places and callings, (and so the *houses of parliament* in their *place and calling*), to endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, &c. How is *this part of the oath of God* fulfilled, if the covenant made for the extirpation of all these be left *arbitrary* ? ”

Thus, then, the solemn league bound the parliaments, in their parliamentary capacity, and by such ways and means as were competent for them in that capacity, “ to endeavour the preservation of the reformed religion in the church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, against their common enemies ; —the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches ; and to bring the churches of God, in the three kingdoms, to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church-government, directory for worship and catechising ; —as also, without respect of persons, the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, (that is, church-government by archbishops, &c.), superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness.” Art. 1. 2.

And further, agreeably to all this, the leaguers solemnly swear,

That they “ shall also, with all faithfulness, endeavour the discovery of all such as have been, or shall be incendiaries, malignants, or evil instruments, by hindering the reformation of religion,—contrary to this league and covenant; (N. B.) *that they may be brought to public trial, and receive condign punishment, as the degree of their offences may require or deserve; or the supreme judicatories of both kingdoms respectively, or others having power from them for that effect, shall judge convenient.*”

Art. 4. Again, they swear, “ all the days of their lives zealously and constantly to continue therein” (that is, in the covenanted cause) “ against all opposition, and promote the same according to their power, against all lets and impediments whatever; and what they are not able themselves to suppress or overcome, they shall *reveal and make known, that it may be timely prevented or removed.*” Art. 6. This, one of the first

constituent members of the Associate Presbytery (who thoroughly understood the true meaning, spirit, and design of the solemn league, and was for following it out honestly) interpreted of revealing and making known unto *the higher powers*. Whence he was strongly of opinion, that the Associate Synod were bound and obliged by the solemn league, and other parts of their received principles, to lay before the civil powers of Great Britain the true state of religion in these lands at this day, and humbly petition them to interpose their authority for the *revival of the covenanted reformation* and uniformity;—for the abolishing of Prelacy in England, raising up our Presbyterian standards, and reforming from other corruptions;—there being such difficulties in the way of accomplishing these things, as the Synod themselves cannot overcome. This, several have thought, was going into the true spirit of the solemn league.

Having thus endeavoured to give a true and genuine account of *the covenanted reformation itself*, contended for by Seceders,—that is, the solemn-league uniformity; permit me, Sir, to offer you a few thoughts upon enforced national uniformities of that kind.

I am aware of what they are founded upon, or drawn from, namely, the plan and model of the Jewish church and nation in the land of Canaan, an essential part of which, by express divine appointment, was a strict uniformity in religion and religious profession among all that people; inasmuch that none were entitled unto the peculiar national privileges, who differed from the national religion; that is, the system of doctrines, laws, and ordinances, delivered unto and imposed upon them *as a nation*, not by mere fallible men like themselves, but by God himself, their great King and Lawgiver in such a sense as he never was unto any other nation, kingdom, or commonwealth. Accordingly

ly I remember somewhere to have read of some of the keen advocates for the covenanted national uniformity, highly praising the church and kingdom of Scotland, in the covenanting period, on this account, that it so much resembled the Jewish theocracy, —the holy nation, or national church of Israel. Which, considering the vast difference the scripture holds forth between the Jewish and the Christian dispensation and church-state, I acknowledge, I do not well understand.—I know of no such nation and kingdom on the face of the earth, since the dissolution of that theocracy ;—no nation and kingdom, in the fundamental constitution whereof there is, by divine appointment, such a mixing and blending of the civil and religious, the national and church privileges : yea, I know of no nation or kingdom now, but may warrantably admit and allow of the apostle's distinction, *within* and *without* ;—without the church, and yet within the nation and national privileges ; inasmuch that persons behaving themselves as good and peaceable subjects of the civil state, may be allowed, without any molestation on the score of religion, to live and trade in the worldly kingdom, enjoy all their natural rights and civil properties ;—although they should make no such profession of the Christian religion, as, according to the rules of the gospel, can entitle them to the fellowship and privileges of evangelical churches. My views of the distinction between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world, necessarily lead me so to think *. Agreeably to this, I cannot help thinking, that religious conditions of civil offices, sacramental or other religious tests (the covenants are partly so at least) to qualify persons for

* “ The commonwealth of the Jews, different in that from all others, was an absolute theocracy ; nor was there, or could there be, any difference between that commonwealth and the church. The laws established there concerning the worship of one invisible Deity, were the civil laws of that people, and a part of their political government, in which God himself was the legislator. Now, if any one can shew me where there is a commonwealth, at this time, constituted upon that foundation, I will acknowledge, that the ecclesiastical laws do there unavoidably become a part of the civil ; and that the subjects of that government both may, and ought to be kept in strict conformity with that church, by the civil power. But there is absolutely no such thing, under the gospel, as a Christian commonwealth. There are, indeed, many cities and kingdoms that have embraced the faith of Christ, but they have retained their ancient form of government ; with which the law of Christ hath not at all meddled.—He instituted no commonwealth. He prescribed unto his followers no new and peculiar form of government, nor put he the sword into any magistrate's hand, with commission to make use of it in forcing men to forsake their former religion, and receive his.”

Locke on toleration, p. 54.

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the same, religious clauses in civil, corporation, or burghs oaths, &c. seem to favour too much of what was foretold as to take place under the reign of Antichrist, Rev. xiii. 17. *that no man might buy or sell, save he who had the mark or name of the beast.* But where hath the King of saints, the King of the kingdom of heaven, commanded to hinder men from buying and selling, or enjoying all their natural and civil rights,—yea, from having a place in kings courts, civil judicatories, armies and navies, &c. if they take not on his mark and name? that is, profess his religion. For he is not, like Antichrist, come to destroy mens lives, or in the least to injure them in their civil concerns;—but to save them.

Here it occurs to mind, and I shall take the liberty of observing it, that, amidst all the opposition the Antiburghers made unto the religious clause in some burghs-oaths, and all their hot zeal against those of their brethren who espoused the same;—they never objected to it in this point of view, *viz.* as making a particular profession of religion the condition of mens enjoying the privileges of civil society. The import of that oath with said clause, I take to be, that none ought to be allowed to enjoy the advantages of civil corporations, or to trade in our burghs, but such only as are of that particular profession of religion, which those who happen to have the lead in public matters judge to be the true religion, and obtain the civil sanction to as such. And, consequently, this must be considered as one of the peculiar and distinguishing principles of that body of Seceders who go under the name of *Burghers*: at least, thus much appears to be implied in, or natively and necessarily to follow upon, their espousing and pronouncing the burghs-oath with said religious clause;—whether they really mean to hold it or not. And thus their scheme, with a witness, leads to the blending and confounding of the civil and the religious, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world,—together with the peculiar affairs and privileges of the one and the other.—Wholly abstracting from the grounds upon which the Antiburghers went in condemning a present swearing of that oath; upon this score, I reckon it highly improper and condemnable: for why may not persons of different denominations, such as Episcopalians, &c. be allowed to trade in our burghs, and enjoy all the privileges of civil society, provided they be good and peaceable members of that society? I can see nothing in the religion of Jesus inconsistent herewith. Although, at the same time, I am very sensible, the Antiburghers could never have objected to it in this point of view, in a consistency with, what may be called, the common cause of Seceders; which, all the while, seems to have been taken for granted and held fast by both parties.

I freely own, I do not see sufficient ground to expect such a rigid uniformity of sentiment in all things, even among saints themselves in the present state, as some have contended for as absolutely necessary, in order to their walking together in the fellowship of the gospel. But this is not the point in hand. — Much less, therefore, do I see sufficient ground for expecting, that all the people of three extensive populous countries will voluntarily, and of their own accord, agree in one confession of faith, one mode of worship, and one form of church-government. And to attempt forcing them to profess such an agreement, contrary unto, or even without their own free choice ;—seems to be altogether unwarrantable.—It is observable, that all the engines of human policy, which have now of a long time been employed in the world for keeping up uniformities of this sort, have hitherto failed of success. Subscriptions, a variety of oaths, and other tests, although imposed under the severest penalties, have proved ineffectual this way.—Even many wise and good men, upon a more diligent and impartial inquiry, have come to see things in a different light ; and so to change their sentiments concerning them. Considering the present state of imperfection, in which, at best, we see and know but in part, and attain unto what knowledge we have, not all at once, but by degrees ; this is scarce to be avoided, as long as men have liberty to think and judge for themselves: And where they have not this liberty, how servile and abject is their condition !—If Christ had appointed an infallible judge, or interpreter of holy scripture on earth ; or if men were to be determined by an implicit faith in, and blind subjection unto the dictates of their superiors, either in church or state ; there might be an end of all differences this way. But neither of these is the case ; although both have been falsely pretended and arrogantly claimed by the church of Rome. Without doubt, unity or oneness among professed Christians in the truths and ordinances of the gospel, is most beautiful and desirable. I pray God, there were more of it at this day. *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity ! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore, Psal. cxxxiii.* But, I profess, I do not understand that pretended Christian unity which arises from, or is influenced and supported by, parliamentary acts of uniformity enforced with civil penalties. Such political unities may do in the kingdoms of this world, or among civil corporations and associations of men ; but, sure, they
are

are quite foreign unto the true Christian unity, described and inculcated in the New Testament, the bond whereof is love. Here I am reminded of a saying of one of your brethren, who is of no small standing and reputation in your way ; as to which, I beg you will not tell me,—“ Here are “ modes of expression which I cannot believe were ever heard “ out of the mouth of any Seceding preacher ;” for I have the best authority for it. That brother, after expressing his hearty approbation of what our Presbyterian ancestors had held on the head of the magistrate’s power concerning the church, granted, that “ it was not easy to determine how far it should be extend- “ ed ; that there were knots there which would not be easily “ loosed :” but maintained, “ that it was clear and undeniable, “ the magistrate was to interpose his authority about church- “ matters ; and that, if he did not so interpose, she would “ all crumble down into Sectaries ; for people would think “ and profess in religion as they pleased, for all that the “ church” (I suppose, he meant the church-officers, or mini- “ sters) “ could do, if the civil powers did not exert their au- “ thority.” This, though uttered in one of the superior judicatories, did not meet with a syllable of contradiction from any of them. Strange ! do those of your way think, that the union and communion of gospel-churches, and the several members thereof, hangs upon the tack of civil sanction and authority ? Is it not rather influenced and maintained by love,—the joint love of the truth believed and professed, and of one another for the truth’s sake, which, in charity, they suppose to be in each other ?—At this rate, how was the Christian church kept from crumbling down into Sectaries the first three centuries ? Yea, how are the Seceding churches themselves kept from so crumbling down ? For, however high, in a way of opinion and speculation, they may run on this point ; and however tenaciously they may stick to the civil ratification and establishment of the covenanted national uniformity, in the period between 1638 and 1650 ;—it is certain, that the present British powers do not interpose their authority for keeping them together, or enforce their scheme with temporal rewards and punishments. An enforced uniformity of this kind, is also evidently inconsistent with and destructive of the rights of conscience and private judgment. But upon this I shall not presently insist. Moreover, although of a long time it was apprehended by the politicians, that a rigid national uniformity in religious profession was absolutely necessary, in order to the peace and prosperity of the civil community ; yet experience has now proved, that they were mistaken in their politics this way ;—yea, hath

hath made it evident to a demonstration, that an enforced uniformity is the very bane of the public weal.

The Secession-scheme's abounding so much in matters somewhat political, is the only apology I have to offer for troubling you with so long a letter on matters of that sort.—*I am, &c.*

P. S. That an enforced national uniformity in religion has a very bad tendency toward civil society itself, might, were it necessary, be illustrated at large from the history of nations. The history of England, for instance, is full to this purpose. Not to go farther back than the reign of Queen Mary :—What dreadful disasters were brought about by the severe penal laws, then bound hard upon all such as would not again submit their necks to the insupportable Romish yoke ! How were the gibbets, stakes, and jails occupied ! And, of consequence, how must agriculture, trade, and all manner of honest industry, stagnate or subside ? Yea, even under some succeeding Protestant reigns, it is well known, no small confusion and national loss ensued, upon the turning of the penal laws, on the score of religion, against Protestant dissenters, who could not in conscience conform to certain habits, rites, and ceremonies of the Episcopal church of England, as then by law established.—Beside many other grievous inconveniencies, a great number of good and peaceable subjects were obliged to leave their native country, and seek for an asylum elsewhere ; many of whom betook themselves to the wild and uncultivated deserts of America.—This oppressive measure, together with arbitrary and tyrannical proceedings in other matters, at length growing altogether insupportable,—issued in a most calamitous and disastrous civil war, in the reign of King Charles I. whereby the whole nation was cast into such doleful convulsions and distractions, as cannot be easily painted out.

And, even after the nation had got rid of that heavy yoke of arbitrary government, and grievous impositions on the consciences of men, and those who formerly had been oppressed come to be masters, and to have the lead in public matters ; — did they, from the past miseries and calamities, learn either true policy, or mercy and compassion to their fellow-men and fellow professed Christians, who in any thing differed from their religious sentiments ? No ; much the same measures were still pursued.—A rigid national uniformity of another kind, that of the solemn league, was keenly driven, at least by a powerful party ; to whose standard the whole nation must come up, otherwise they could have no liberty to profess religion, or to worship God publicly. So that arbitrary power and an imposing spirit seemed only to change hands. Well, what was the consequence ? Among many other disagreeable things, the whole military force came to be turned against

the then civil authority of the nation; which of new embroiled the whole kingdom. For the army, (in which were many Independents and Baptists), having fought valiantly in the cause of liberty, and at length beat the Episcopalians and Royalists out of the field, would not suffer themselves to be robbed of liberty, — particularly the liberty of their consciences, which was the main prize they had been fighting for, — nor again to be enthralled, — by a new set of masters. Whence it came to pass, that when the parliament, overawed by the English Presbyterians and Scotch nation, would not gratify them so far, as to insert in the act settling Presbytery, a tolerating or indulging clause, for the benefit of tender consciences which might scruple at some parts of it; they entered into a resolution to stand by one another, and that they should not be disbanded, nor transported out of the kingdom, — until such time as they obtained security for their own and other people's liberty. For, it is to be remembered, they did not crave an overthrow of the Presbyterian government; but, allowing it to stand as the national establishment, and to have all the civil emoluments annexed to it, — they only craved indulgence for such as could not, in all points, conform thereto. And then, exasperated by the high proceedings on the other side, they at length pushed matters unto a desperate issue: which of new cast the nation into melancholy confusions.

Once more: The Episcopal party having again got into the saddle at the restoration of King Charles II. and their former masters at their mercy; what terrible scenes of oppression, cruelty, and distress (which indeed are a lasting stain to the British annals) opened, both in England and Scotland! By reason of the rigid uniformity-acts enforced with severe penalties, and rigorously executed, — many were put to death, — vast numbers shut up in prison, where not a few died, — great sums of money were extorted, — yea, people's whole goods and effects taken from them by ruffians and miscreants, who were pests to society, and the offscouring of the earth. — Such methods must effectually discourage all honest industry, or diligence in worldly callings; because thus, what people earned to-day, they knew not but it might be taken from them to-morrow. Neither was it safe for people to trust, or give credit unto, their dissenting neighbours; because they were not sure, but all might be taken from them, on the score of religion, before payment could be made; — which must be a very considerable drawback on the commercial interest of the nation. — Under this grievous yoke of tyranny and oppression these nations groaned, until at length they were delivered therefrom by the memorable revolution. At and ever since that happy period, the natural rights and liberties of mankind came to be better understood and attended to in this country; and,

and, consequently, the civil state has, for the most part, been in a much more settled and prosperous condition. By that time, the politicians had leisure to compare the effects and consequences of Cromwell's toleration, with those, either of the solemn-league uniformity driven in that period, or of the Episcopal uniformity rigorously enforced after the restoration; and to consider which of them tended most unto the temporal interest of the nation. And, indeed, they would seem in so far to have formed their maxims of policy and government accordingly.

Upon the whole, then, whether it be ground of lamentation, or of thankfulness, that the Scotch parliament at the revolution did not revive certain parliamentary acts of uniformity in religion and church-government, enforced with heavy penalties,—I shall leave to all the true friends of religion, liberty, and their country, to judge.

I shall conclude this postscript with the following quotation from a great name brought on the field in this controversy by yourself.

“ If men enter into seditious conspiracies, it is not religion in-
 “ spires them to it in their meetings; but their sufferings and
 “ oppressions that make them willing to ease themselves. Just
 “ and moderate governments are every where quiet, every where
 “ safe. But oppression raises ferments, and makes men strug-
 “ gle to cast off an uneasy and tyrannical yoke. It is not the di-
 “ versity of opinions, which cannot be avoided, but the refusal
 “ of toleration to those that are of different opinions, which
 “ might have been granted, that has produced all the bustles and
 “ wars that have been in the Christian world, on account of reli-
 “ gion. The heads and leaders of the church, moved by avarice
 “ and insatiable desire of dominion, making use of the immode-
 “ rate ambition of magistrates, and the credulous superstition
 “ of the giddy multitude, have incensed and animated them a-
 “ gainst those who dissent from themselves; by preaching unto
 “ them, contrary to the laws of the gospel, and to the precepts
 “ of charity, that schismatics and heretics are to be outed of their
 “ possessions, and destroyed. And thus have they mixed toge-
 “ ther, and confounded two things, that are in themselves most
 “ different, the church and the commonwealth. Now, as it is
 “ very difficult for men patiently to suffer themselves to be stript
 “ of the goods, which they have got by their honest industry;
 “ and, contrary to all the laws of equity, both human and di-
 “ vine, to be delivered up for a prey unto other mens violence
 “ and rapine; especially when they are otherwise altogether
 “ blameless; and that the occasion for which they are thus treat-
 “ ed, does not at all belong to the jurisdiction of the magistrate,
 “ but entirely to the conscience of every particular man; for the
 “ conduct

“ conduct of which he is accountable unto God only; what
 “ else can be expected, but that these men, growing weary of
 “ the evils under which they labour, should in the end think it
 “ lawful for them to resist force with force, and to defend their
 “ natural rights, which are not forfeitable on account of religion,
 “ with arms as well as they can? That this has been hitherto
 “ the ordinary course of things, is abundantly evident in histo-
 “ ry: and that it will continue to be so hereafter, is but too ap-
 “ parent in reason. It cannot indeed be otherwise, so long as
 “ the principle of persecution for religion shall prevail, as it has
 “ done hitherto, with magistrate and people; and so long as
 “ those that ought to be the preachers of peace and concord,
 “ shall continue, with all their art and strength, to excite men
 “ to arms, and sound the trumpet of war. But that magistrates
 “ should thus suffer these incendiaries, and disturbers of the pu-
 “ blic peace, might justly be wondered at, if it did not appear
 “ that they have been invited by them unto a participation of
 “ the spoil, and have therefore thought fit to make use of their
 “ covetousness and pride, as means whereby to increase their own
 “ power. For who does not see that *these good men* are indeed
 “ more ministers of the government, than ministers of the go-
 “ spel; and that by flattering the ambition, and favouring the
 “ dominion of princes and men in authority, they endeavour
 “ with all their might to promote that tyranny in the common-
 “ wealth, which otherwise they should not be able to establish in
 “ the church? This is the unhappy agreement that we see be-
 “ tween the church and state. Whereas, if each of them would
 “ contain itself within its own bounds, the one attending to the
 “ worldly welfare of the commonwealth, the other to the salva-
 “ tion of souls, it is impossible that any discord should ever have
 “ happened between them. *Sed pudet hac opprobria, &c.*

“ God Almighty grant, I beseech him, that the gospel of
 “ peace may at length be preached, and that civil magistrates,
 “ growing more careful to conform their own consciences to the
 “ law of God, and less solicitous about the binding of other
 “ mens consciences by human laws, may, like fathers of their
 “ country, direct all their counsels and endeavours to promote
 “ universally the civil welfare of all their children; except only
 “ of such as are arrogant, ungovernable, and injurious to their
 “ brethren; and that all ecclesiastical men, who boast themselves
 “ to be the successors of the apostles, walking peaceably and mo-
 “ destly in the apostles steps, without intermeddling with state-
 “ affairs, may apply themselves wholly to promote the salvation
 “ of souls. Farewell.” *Locke on toleration, p. 61. 63. 64.*

L E T T E R IX.

S I R,

HAVING some leisure-hours to-day, I thought proper to spend them in a further consideration of the " matters somewhat political," in question between you and me.

In order to have the Seceders meaning of the *covenanted reformation* (particularly as engaged unto by them in their new covenant, which they call a renovation of the two old ones) more fully ascertained and declared;—beside what is mentioned in my last concerning the solemn league-reformation and uniformity, I added,—"*Together with, it may be, the severe laws enacted by both the English and Scotch parliaments, especially the latter, in that period, for the promoting thereof;—and for the non-revival of which the foresaids [that is, the Seceders] loudly complain of, and testify against the revolution-parliament.*"—As to this you say "Nor can there be any thing further from truth, than that the Seceders ever complained of, or testified against the revolution-parliament, for the non-revival of any of the compulsory laws of the former period," that is, between 1638 and 1650. If this assertion of yours be true, certainly some parts of their testimony give a very uncertain sound. At this rate, what do they mean by mourning over, and testifying against the revolution-parliament's neglecting, overlooking, and passing by all the legal securities given to this church, in that covenanting period from 1638 to 1650;—and also, their not repealing the act rescissory, whereby these securities, or parliamentary statutes in favour of the covenanted uniformity, were rescinded? See *Test. p. 41.* and *Act for renewing the covenants, p. 101.* "And thus," say they, "that great work, which the Lord wrought with an outstretched arm in the days of our fathers, lies still buried under the grave-stone of several parliamentary acts and deeds; which is an iniquity that testifies against us to this very day," *ib.* Where you may observe, that the great work brought about in the period referred to, and thus left buried at the revolution, cannot be understood of the Westminster confession, nor yet of the Presbyterian worship and government; because both these were approved, ratified, and established as the national profession, by the Scotch parliament at the revolution: so that this must necessarily be understood of something else, whatever it be.

For setting this matter in a clear light,—I ask, Were not the compulsory laws of that period, particularly those imposing the covenants upon all his Majesty's subjects, under civil pains,—legal securities unto this covenanting church, and in favour of the covenanted national uniformity? Were they not some of those

those instances wherein, “ during this period, the estates of the
 “ nation also gave their helping hand to the work of reforma-
 “ tion ;” and which Seceders “ judge it their duty to record
 “ and bear witness unto ?” *Test. p. 18. 19.* In consequence,
 and by means whereof, “ the building of the house of God”
 (the covenanted national uniformity) “ went on prosperously
 “ and successfully,” *p. 16.* And indeed well might it do so,
 while the engines of this world were so much employed for the
 furtherance thereof. Was it not by such parliamentary acts and
 statutes, that “ the glorious building, the reformation” of that
 period, was “ ratified, confirmed, and established in the strong-
 “ est terms by law ?” *p. 20.* Strong terms indeed ! as appears
 by looking into the laws themselves. And, if they really be so,
 who can doubt but Seceders condemn, and testify against the
 revolution-parliament, for not reviving these laws ? For can they
 possibly condemn and testify against that parliament, for neglect-
 ing and passing by *all the legal securities* then given unto this
 church, and the covenanted reformation ; and yet not condemn
 and testify against them, for passing by, or not reviving those laws,
 acts, and deeds, which were the *principal legal securities* then
 given ? Would not this be very like a contradiction in terms ?
 And, acute as you are, I persuade myself, you will find it no
 easy matter to reconcile flat contradictions. If you will not
 admit this sense of this part of the Secession-testimony, I can-
 not help thinking, you will represent that body as speaking and
 writing, testifying and swearing, no body (except it may be
 yourself) knows what.—And further, do not all know, that by
 an unlimited repeal of the act rescissory (and, sure, it is an un-
 limited repeal Seceders plead for) all the parliamentary acts and
 deeds of that period, without exception, and consequently,
 those imposing the covenants as above, among the rest, would
 have been revived, and become of full force ?—Pray, then, what
 could you possibly mean by the strong and confident assertion
 presently under consideration ? How can you make it good ?
 But, perhaps, you thought every body would take it for granted,
 upon your bare word ; without examining, whether it be so,
 or no.

Such as have leisure, and want further satisfaction on this head,
 might read over the writings of the Antiburghers, in that famous
 controversy before mentioned concerning the burghs-oath ;
 where they will meet with a great deal to this purpose. At pre-
 sent, I shall only give one instance. It is in a book, wrote by
 the late Mr Campbell at Ceres, who was a thorough adept in,
 and most zealous advocate for, the covenanted reformation, as
 held by Seceders. The second section of his book is, for “ vin-
 “ dicating that part of the testimony and confession of sins
 “ which

“ which relates to the settlement of religion at the revolution, and
 “ shewing that it is a certain fact, and a standing ground of God’s
 “ controversy with this land, that our parliament at that time left
 “ our second reforming period lying buried under the act re-
 “ scissory, and so did not establish that reformation in profession
 “ and principle, nor (N. B.) *revive all acts and laws in favour*
 “ *of it.*” In the prosecution whereof he particularizes, and
 expressly mentions the act of parliament imposing the national
 covenant, *anno* 1640, and the act of parliament imposing the
 solemn league and covenant, *anno* 1644, (which two acts, it is
 to be remembered, are several times expressly mentioned, and
 with approbation referred to, in the judicial testimony itself;
 as I may have occasion to observe afterwards), as instances of
 those laws and acts passed in favour of the covenanted reforma-
 tion in the foresaid period, which the revolution-parliament did
 not revive, and the non-revival whereof is declared to be,—
 “ a standing ground of God’s controversy with this land.”
 And, to the best of my knowledge,—what he so declared has
 “ never, either then or since, met with a syllable of contradic-
 “ tion from any of them.” Doubtless, then, either you or he
 must have mistaken and misrepresented this part of the testi-
 mony; and so I shall leave it between you and him. He indeed
 is long ago called off the field of controversy by death; but his
 writings, yet extant, speak for him. And thus much I shall
 say in his favour, that he seems to have understood the testi-
 mony, in a sense much more agreeable to the plain and obvious
 meaning of its words, and the evident scope and tendency of
 the whole, than that in which you would have the public to
 understand some leading parts of it. — But you will hear more
 of him by and by.

With a view, as I take it, to support your former assertion,
 you add,—“ The Associate Presbytery, when acknowledging
 “ the reformation of that period in their judicial testimony,
 “ did immediately add,—“ It is not hereby intended to affirm,
 “ that, under the above-mentioned period, there was nothing
 “ defective or wanting as to the beauty and order of the house
 “ of God, or that there was nothing culpable in the administra-
 “ tion.” Yea, say you, “ they have made an open display of
 “ their principles, in opposition to all compulsory methods in
 “ that or any other period in matters of mere religion.”—As
 to that passage of the testimony; I believe, no men of any to-
 lerable prudence and understanding at all, would venture so to
 affirm of the church in any period whatever, “ while in an
 “ imperfect state,” and under the guidance and direction of
 fallible, uninspired men. Thus much, however, I am sure
 of; the Associate Presbytery have on all occasions been very
 cautious

cautious and sparing on this head. I never remember to have met with them particularising or specifying any one thing as wrong and sinful in all that period. For as full and explicit as they are in testifying against and abjuring what they reckon amiss in the conduct of our ancestors in other periods; no part of their management in that, is in the least found fault with. So far from it, that they begin their catalogue of public evils, with the public resolutions, *anno* 1650 or 1651, as if there had been nothing at all culpable or condemnable in the preceding period. Every thing they mention relative to it, is with approbation; except the Duke's engagement, or the like, which was against the covenanted reformation. Sure, then, it is not in the testimony, or confession of sins, that "they have made an open display of their principles in opposition to all compulsory methods of that or any other period in matters of mere religion." And if they really reckoned, the "compulsory methods of that period," particularly, the severe laws imposing the covenants, — wrong; certainly they should have testified against, and abjured these, as well as the other evils specified. For, if they were evils, doubtless, they were very great and hainous evils; inasmuch as they proved the source and spring of many other evils; particularly, awful profanation of the name of God by rash, ignorant, and false, or deceitful swearing; which, at length, issued in a dreadful scene of perjury and covenant-violation. Now, if perjury and covenant-breaking be a mournful evil; no doubt, that which, as to many, is the cause or occasion thereof, must be no less so. Why then are not these engaged to be contended against? If to this you should reply, that, be these right or wrong, we are not to rip up the sores, or uncover the nakedness of our reforming ancestors; I shall only say, that there seems to be the same, if not more reason for not ripping up the sores, and uncovering the nakedness of our suffering ancestors. If we are to draw a veil over the failings and misconducts of men when, so to speak, in the saddle, and supported with all the civil and military power of the nation; why not shew the same tenderness to them, when in the hot flames of persecution and distress? which does not seem to have been so much attended unto by the Associate Presbytery.—But I need not insist upon this; since, instead of condemning, and testifying against, it appears, that they not obscurely homologate and approve of said measures. Beside what has been already said to this purpose, it may now be added, that the pieces of "the reformation they are acknowledging," immediately before the words you quote, are, the act of parliament ratifying and imposing the covenanted reformation, 1640, the act of parliament ratifying and enjoining the solemn league,

1644, and sundry laudable acts of parliament passed in 1649, some of which have already been referred unto :—Which “ particu-
 “ lars,” say they, “ are some instances of the power and goodness
 “ of the most high God, manifested in the beginning and pro-
 “ gress of the work of reformation in this land, which this
 “ Presbytery judge it their duty to record and bear witness un-
 “ to.” Again, p. 109. “ In like manner, they hereby own and
 “ assert the perpetual obligation of the national covenant of
 “ Scotland,—*as ratified by act of parliament 1640.*—As also,
 “ they own and assert the perpetual obligation of the solemn
 “ league and covenant, for maintaining and carrying on a work
 “ of reformation in the three kingdoms,—*ratified by act of par-
 “ liament of Scotland, 1644.*” Now, do not these and the like
 passages evidently imply an homologation of the parliamentary
 acts imposing the covenants? With what face can Antiburgher-
 Seceders refuse this? especially considering their own reason-
 ings on the head of swearing the religious clause in some bur-
 gels-oaths *; as (if my memory does not escape me) evidently
 implying an homologation of the civil ratification of religion at
 the revolution ;—not only the religion settled, but the settlement
 itself, with all its defects and corruptions.—I shall only add,
 that the supplication of the general assembly, ordinance of the
 privy council, and act of parliament relative to this imposing of
 the national covenant, are expressly mentioned in the narrative
 prefixed to that covenant ;—and also, the act of parliament im-
 posing the solemn league, — in the narrative thereto prefixed :
 both which narratives are, with approbation, read over every
 time these covenants are renewed among Seceders. Whatever
 therefore, upon the whole, might be culpable in the administra-
 tion of that period ; certainly, in their judgment, the compulso-
 ry methods for promoting the covenanted reformation were
 not so.

But you seem to think, that you have met with this “ open
 “ display” elsewhere, viz. in their Answers to Mr Nairn ; where-
 of you give a large quotation in your next paragraph. I have
 sometimes thought, that this book “ bears evident marks of har-
 “ mony with” the productions of your pen. But that matters
 not ; since the Association have judicially adopted it. I have al-
 so thought, that the Associate Presbytery were considerably put
 to it, and pinched there, between two things ; that is, on the
 one hand, zealously contending for, what is called, the civil or

* The said clause runs thus : —“ Here I protest, before God and
 “ your Lordships, That I profess, and allow with my heart, the true
 “ religion presently professed within this realm, and authorised by the
 “ laws thereof: I shall abide thereat, and defend the same, to my life’s
 “ end; renouncing the Roman religion called Papistry.”

state reformation attained unto in the period between 1638 and 1650, which sets all civil and military offices on the express condition of swearing the covenants; and, on the other, acknowledging, and submitting to our present magistrates, who, instead of swearing the covenants, are judicially declared to be keeping them buried under sundry grave-stones. Here, in the opinion of some, Mr Nairn pinched the Presbytery not a little. For, if none *ought* to be civil magistrates in Great Britain, but such as swear the covenants; how come they who do not so swear to be acknowledged as *rightful magistrates*? Or, lest this, *viz.* of their being *rightful magistrates*, should be over strong, how come they to be “obeyed in their lawful commands, as long as the body politic acknowledges them?” But, perhaps, this is only a difficulty to weak minds, which may be easily solved by your superior abilities; and therefore I shall not insist upon it.

This passage of the Answers must certainly be understood in a full consistency with the Associate Presbytery’s elsewhere declared principles on the head of the civil magistrate’s power *circa sacra*: nor indeed does it appear to be any wise inconsistent with said principles. Very true, it is here declared, that “the civil magistrate is not to assume any *lordship* IMMEDIATELY over mens consciences, nor to make any *encroachment upon the special privileges and business of the church.*”—But then, for the better understanding of this, it is to be remembered, What Seceders have hitherto contended for this way, is,—That it is the special privilege and business of the church, (meaning the church representative, or ministers of the church), to meet together in a judicative capacity, and authoritatively determine in all points belonging to religion and the worship of God, for all the nation. Thus far the civil magistrate is to lie dormant. But, this being once done, the church-courts are, “not only to advise the magistrate, but directly apply to him for the civil sanction unto their deeds and determinations; which it is his bounden duty to give,” at least if they can get him persuaded, that these their determinations are agreeable to the word of God. *Wilson’s Defence*, p. 302. For, you know, the power assigned by them unto the secular magistrate *circa sacra*, is not privative, but cumulative. This then, they say, is the beautiful order appointed by God in his church. And indeed it seems not in the least to displease them, however high the magistrate’s sanction should run, or however severe methods he should use, for enforcing their determinations, and procuring submission unto their dictates. But then, if this order be in the least inverted; that is, if the magistrate at first instance interfere in any matters respecting the church, or do any thing contrary to the will and pleasure of the ministers;—this is the Erastian encroachment up-

on the rights and privileges of the church, which they complain of, and testify against. This, I am persuaded, is the true state of the case.

To this purpose, I beg leave to remind you of the following passages from the late brother's book, which I had occasion to mention formerly. Before giving the quotation itself, I shall observe, that it will be very long, and the matter of it, abstractly considered, some may think, not very important. But yet it is not a little to our present purpose; and notably serves to shew, that I am not giving any "hideous representation of the Seceders." It clearly informs us, what they take to be the beautiful order of carrying on the covenanted reformation, namely, the clergy who espouse it going foremost; and then the civil powers annexing their sanction unto their judicial deeds and decisions;—thus imposing them upon all the subjects, under civil penalties. I know who would pronounce the refusing of the warrantableness of this,—a Sectarian tenet. It also serves to inform such as have not much access to read the history of those times, of the methods used in that renowned period, whereto Seceders have served themselves heirs, for promoting said reformation and uniformity;—and also, how heartily Seceders approve of these methods. According to the account he gives, which, I suppose, is a very true one, you see, that in those days when the powers were reckoned duly to nurse, countenance, and strengthen the hands of the church, whatever was enacted by the general assembly, was forthwith carried unto the civil power, to be corroborated and imposed. For which cause, when at any time the supreme magistrate was supplicated to convene the general assembly, he was also supplicated to convene the high court of parliament, if not then sitting,—to impose their determinations. Agreeably to this, one article of the border-treaty 1639 was, "That a free national assembly should be held at Edinburgh, upon the 6th of August; and that the parliament should meet at the same place, upon the 20th of August, in order to give the civil sanction to the acts and proceedings of the assembly." *Wilson's Defence*, p. 295. So that the civil sanction was by treaty secured unto the acts and proceedings of that assembly, before ever it was known what they would be.

The passages from Mr Campbell I had in view, are.—"We have it laid down as a principle in our Confession of Faith, chap. 23. sect. 3. *The civil magistrate may not assume to himself,* &c.*—From this quotation of our Confession, we may notice what power the magistrate hath about the church, both nega-

* This quotation from the Confession is inserted at full length in the beginning of letter 13.

tively and positively.—Positively, he hath a power about sacred things; he is to be a nursing-father to the church, to use that power given him of God in her defence. Nevertheless, he is not to use this power of himself; but that he may employ it for the good of the church, he is to call her judicatories, that they may go about their work, at which he may be present; and so his proper work is, to ratify by civil sanction, what they determine and conclude.

“ If we look into our second reforming period, we shall find our reforming parliaments proceeding in this beautiful scriptural order in reformation; the church always going foremost, and the state ratifying by civil sanction, what the church did. Thus we find the church, *anno* 1638, proceeded in reformation, after the manner of the Levites in the days of Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxix. 4.—18. They purged the house of God, by deposing and excommunicating most of the prelates, condemning the service-book, book of canons, book of ordination, the high commission, the corrupt assemblies, and the civil places and power of kirkmen: they condemned Episcopacy, and found it to be abjured in our national covenant: in like manner, they set up the tabernacle that had been for many years taken down, by approving the registers of former lawful assemblies, settling the Presbyterian order of the house of God, appointing the renovation of the national covenant, in a way suited to the circumstances of their own time; and they address his Majesty the King to ratify all by his civil sanction: which the state accordingly did in their act, June 11. 1640, entitled, *Act anent the ratification of acts of the assembly*; in which act of parliament, the act of assembly, passed August 17. 1639, is *verbatim* recorded, and contains in it the substance of what the preceding assembly had done in purging the house of God. And as the assembly 1639 did ratify and approve of the proceedings of the foregoing assembly 1638; so the parliament, in ratifying of the proceedings of the assembly 1639, did hereby ratify and approve of the reformation carried on by the assembly 1638; and that in a way agreeable to our principles laid down in the word of God and confession of faith, as above hinted.—Thus the parliament kept its due place and station, in ratifying that reformation which was carried on by the church. In like manner, when the reformation took footing in England, and uniformity in worship and catechising were aimed at in both kingdoms, the parliament of England called an assembly of divines,” (By way of parenthesis, I beg leave to observe, that it was not of the authoritative or juridical kind), “ and commissioners were sent from the church of Scotland, to deliberate upon that grave and weighty affair, according

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 “ *teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law.* Mal. ii. 7. *For*
 “ *the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the*
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 “ a confession of faith, larger and shorter catechisms, and a di-
 “ rectory for the public worship of God, all which were recei-
 “ ved by the assembly of this church, and ratified by the states,
 “ still in the same beautiful order, viz. As the assembly, by their
 “ act, August 27. 1647, received and approved of the confes-
 “ sion of faith; and as by their act, July 2. 1648, sess. 10. they
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 “ ly 28, the same year, all as a part of the then intended unifor-
 “ mity: so the estates of parliament, by their act, Feb. 7. 1649,
 “ did ratify and approve the said confession and catechisms, and
 “ the above three acts of assembly receiving the same. Farther,
 “ as the assembly, by their act, Feb. 3. 1645, did receive, ap-
 “ prove, and establish the directory for public worship; so the
 “ parliament, by their act passed the 6th day of the same month,
 “ did ratify and approve the said directory, and act of assembly
 “ receiving the same. Again, as the general assembly did, by
 “ their act, Aug. 17. 1643, approve of the solemn league and
 “ covenant; so the estates of parliament, by their act passed the
 “ very same day, did approve and receive the same. Finally, as
 “ the commission of the general assembly did, by their act, Oct.
 “ 11. 1643, ordain the receiving, swearing, and subscribing of
 “ the solemn league and covenant; so the commissioners of the
 “ convention of estates did, by their act the very next day, una-
 “ nimously receive, embrace, and ordain the solemn swearing
 “ and subscribing thereof by all his Majesty's subjects. Thus
 “ there was a beautiful order observed in all that period, the
 “ church setting up the Lord's tabernacle, and the state coming
 “ after them in a way of using their power and authority in de-
 “ fence of the said beautiful reformation.—Thus, in this time
 “ of reformation, church-judicatories, according to their office
 “ and duty, did proceed in setting up the tabernacle, that had
 “ been about forty years taken down; and our civil rulers were
 “ as nursing-fathers unto the church, not usurping a power over
 “ her in sacred things, but exercising their power about her,
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then appear terrible, if severe penal laws, and worldly evils, would render her so.

“ Having thus given a short hint of our principles anent the government and management of the church from the word of God, our confession of faith, and (N. B.) the practice of church and state in the second reformation-period *, we proceed, in the second place, to take a view of the conduct of our parliament with reference to the settlement of religion at the revolution, and we shall find it to be the quite reverse : —Which will appear evident if we consider,—that the state at the revolution, instead of following the beautiful scriptural order observed by David and Hezekiah of old, and also by our reforming parliaments in the second reformation-period, viz. in setting the church always foremost in the work of the Lord, and they coming after in their turn, and ratifying by civil sanction what the church did, inverted this order, by prescribing to the church, and so cannot be cleared from Erastianism in their procedure. For although the revolution took place *anno* 1688, yet no general assembly was allowed to meet until two years thereafter, viz. October 16. 1690; and about four months and some days before that time, viz. June 7th that year, did take upon them to settle religion, as they say, and Presbyterian church-government, as is narrated in their act, viz.—“ Our Sovereign Lord and Lady,” &c. — Here observe, that they read, voted, and approved the confession, without regarding any act, either of the assemblies of this church receiving and approving the said confession, or of former parliaments ratifying the same : and as they shewed no particular regard unto what either the church or state had done in the second reforming period anent this confession, so they as little regarded the officers of the house of God that were in being at the time, while they thus took upon them to settle religion so long before they allowed them to meet in a general assembly. Thus, as the Rev. Mr Wilson expresses it in his *Defence*, p. 265. 266. “ the said parliament (1690) did indeed leave the acts of parliament

* Thus the principles of Seceders concerning the government and management of the church, are drawn from the practice of church and state in the second reformation-period, as well as from the word of God, and the confession of faith. In order therefore to understand these principles, it is necessary to be acquainted with the history of the practice of both church and state in that period, as well as the word of God, and the confession of faith : which makes good what I observed to much the same purpose in a former letter.—And if their principles be thus framed from the practice of church and state in said period ; it is beyond all question, that they homologate the proceedings of both.

“ 1649,

“ 1649, and the other acts of that period, buried under the act
 “ rescissory ; and therefore, they made an act of their own with
 “ respect to our confession of faith.” Thus they acted contrary
 “ to the scriptural order observed by the state in the second re-
 “ forming period, and did hereby encroach upon the intrinsic
 “ power of the church.—Again, the parliament, in this act,
 “ do settle Presbyterian church-government. — Whereupon it
 “ may be observed,—as they subverted the order of the house
 “ of God in the matter of doctrine, so do they here also in
 “ the matter of government, which Mr Wilson judiciously ob-
 “ serves in his *Defence*, p. 270. “ Hereby the due order of the
 “ house of God was inverted, in regard the settlement of the
 “ government of the church belongs, in the first instance, un-
 “ to a judicatory of Christ met together in the name of the
 “ Lord Jesus ; and that which is incumbent upon the civil powers
 “ in this case, is *only to give the civil sanction* unto the same *.”
Vindication of the judicial act and testimony, p. 43.—50.—Now,
 what this author so wrote “ has never,” for aught I know,
 “ either then or since, met with a syllable of contradiction from
 “ any of them.” Nor indeed could it consistently do so ; be-
 cause it is the very spirit and life of their testimony.

Thus then, according to any view I can have of the Secession-
 scheme on this head, the civil magistrate is made to wait upon
 the clergy or ministers of the church, as the executioner of their
 will and pleasure. And thus also, disobedience to them, in
 any of their decisions, comes, upon the matter, to be rendered
 disobedience to the civil authority of the nation, and punishable
 as such. Whence, if any of the subjects will not tamely sub-
 mit, they may be prosecuted at civil law, and brought in guilty
 before some secular tribunal or other. Wherefore, in a word,
 although, according to Seceders, the civil magistrate may not
 “ assume any lordship immediately over mens consciences, &c.”
 yet he may do so mediately, and at second hand : that is, he

* Agreeably to what Mr Wilson has declared above, concerning the
 imposing of church deeds and determinations in general ;—he expressly
 vindicates the imposing of the covenants under civil penalties, in op-
 position to Mr Currie’s objections on that head, see pages 300. 301.—
 To which purpose, he observes, “ that if there is not a penalty annexed
 “ unto the law, it cannot be said to be imposed by authority ; a law
 “ without a sanction, is only a mere recommendation, which may be
 “ obeyed or disobeyed as the subject pleases.”—“ And upon this ground,
 “ I affirm, that the magistrate’s power extends not to the establishing
 “ of any articles of faith, or forms of worship, by the force of his
 “ laws. For laws are of no force at all without penalties, and pe-
 “ nalties in this case are absolutely impertinent ; because they are not
 “ proper to convince the mind.” *Locke on toleration*, p. 37.

may,

may, yea ought to enforce the clergy's deeds and determinations with his worldly sanctions, for making all men submit unto the same, without contradiction or gainfaying.

As to the following words in your quotation, from the Answers to Mr Nairn, presently under consideration, *viz.* "It were " absurd to suppose, that there could or ought to be any exercise " thereof (civil magistracy) toward its end,—but what can be " argued for and defended upon natural principles, &c."—they do not at all infer, that Seceders do not adopt the sense " questioned about" in my letter, relative to the part the civil powers are to act in, or concerning religion. For it is well known, that fundry learned writers who have run very high on this point, have strenuously argued for, and elaborately defended the part which they suppose the civil magistrate should act, and the compulsory methods he should make use of, as to matters of religion,—"upon natural principles." If I rightly remember, Dr Sherlock a very learned and acute writer, and Mr Willison a very serious and devout writer, both men of anti-toleration-principles, although on different plans, do so reason and argue.

I shall not comment any further "upon the above declaration; nor does there seem to be any particular need for doing " so. But I may appeal to all the world, if principles of greater " and better freedom on that subject were" never "taught by " Mr Locke, or any other advocate for the rights of mankind," than those held and maintained by Seceders; a leading point of whose testimony is, an enforced national uniformity in religion, without toleration.—Perhaps, some of your brethren will not thank you for your appeal on this head; that is, for giving out to the world, that they are all as much men of toleration-principles, as " Mr Locke, or any other advocate for the rights of " mankind." (See Locke's letters concerning toleration, and Hoadley's writings, particularly, his sermon before the King from John xviii. 36. and his answer to the representation of the lower house of convocation.)

From all the above, I think, it is obvious, that Seceders approve of the compulsory or penal laws in favour of the covenanted reformation, made in the period between 1638 and 1650;—and that they complain of, and testify against the revolution-parliament, for not reviving the same.

From the foregoing part of my correspondence with you, you will, no doubt, gather, that I am not clear as to the use of such methods for promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ in the world; and, perhaps, more may occur to much the same purpose afterwards.—In the mean while, in Zech. iv. 6. 7. 8. 9. and vi. 12. 13. it is prophesied and foretold of the Lord Jesus, under the type of Zerubbabel, that he *shall build the temple of the*

Lord,

Lord, the spiritual house of the New-testament church, shadowed out by the material house of the second temple. How, or by what means? *Not by might nor by power; not by military force, nor by carnal power and policy, or any other engines of this world;—but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah.* And to this agrees that illustrious prophecy concerning the erection and enlargement of the Messiah's kingdom in gospel-days, Psal. cx. 1. 2. 3. *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power: in the beauty of holiness, from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth.* To the same purpose, if I mistake not, is Psal. xlv. 3. 4. 5. *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty: with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride thou, prosper thou, upon the word of truth, of meekness, and of righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.* I shall only further mention that very ancient prediction concerning the conversion and inbringing of the Gentiles, which also intimates the way and means whereby that grand event was to be brought about, Gen. ix. 27. *God shall enlarge, or, as the word may be read, persuade, Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.* From which and the like Old-testament prophecies respecting New-testament times, it plainly appears, that the glorious gospel, accompanied with the power and demonstration of the Spirit, was to be the grand and effectual engine of heaven, for the gathering and advancement of the Messiah's kingdom. Here there was to be no room for outward force, or any methods of violence, whether of the greater or lesser sort: but as the people of old willingly offered materials for the building of the tabernacle; so, by means of the word accompanied with the power of the Spirit, the Redeemer's people were to be persuaded, and determined willingly to offer themselves, materials for the spiritual building of the gospel-church;—willingly and with one accord assembling themselves, to serve the highest Lord, in the spiritual worship and service of the New Testament. And indeed, from the New-testament writings, it appears, that the event happened accordingly. Neither the doctrine, nor the practice and example of Christ and his apostles seem to warrant the use of any such engines, as parliamentary power, and civil pains or penal statutes, for the promoting and enforcing of his kingdom and cause on earth. The apostles (who, in all things respecting his kingdom, had the mind of Christ) just went up and down among the nations, agreeably to their commission, preaching

the gospel ; thus, commending themselves unto the consciences of men, by manifestation of the truth ; without ever calling in the aid of the secular arm, the encouragements or discouragements of the civil state ; or so much as giving any directions on that head, when once the powers should become Christian. Yea, the truth is, their commission did not extend unto any such thing ; see Matth. xxviii. 19. 20. Mark xvi. 15. 16. *Knowing therefore the terrors*, not of this world, but *of the Lord* ; they did not attempt to force, but *persuaded men*. And the hand and power of the Almighty going along with them, much people were added to the Lord, and joined to the multitude of them who believed ; — great multitudes of all sorts were gathered to the blessed Shiloh ; and made obedient, not to human laws, but to the faith. The preaching of the gospel coming unto them, not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, without any other sanction or enforcement, prevailed mightily, and wrought effectually. Here I am reminded of the apostle's emphatic words, 2 Cor. x. 3. 4. 5. *Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*—According to the above-mentioned “ beautiful order,” contended for by Seceders ; it is plain, the kingdom of Christ must needs come with observation ; that is, with noise and parade, among the states and empires of the world : For with what more noise and parade does a kingdom of this world come, than the kingdom of Christ must needs do, when it has the legislative power of nations and kingdoms, or kings and parliaments, in their regal and parliamentary capacity, appearing at the head of it, and annexing the rewards and punishments of the worldly kingdom unto it ? But this I am not able to reconcile with Luke xvii. 20. 21.

I shall only add : In my view, it will not follow from the sanctions of temporal punishments which obtained in the Jewish theocracy, that therefore sanctions of that sort are to be annexed by the secular magistrate unto the doctrines and institutions of Christ under the gospel. Here I beg leave to insert the following excerpt from Dr Increase Mather's life, published by his son, at Boston, 1724.

“ He became sensible, that the example of the Israelitish reformers, inflicting penalties on false worshippers, would not legitimate the like proceedings among the Christian Gentiles. For the holy land of old was, by a deed of gift from God, miraculously and indisputably granted to the Israelitish nation ; and the condition on which they held it, was their observation of the Mosaic institutions. To violate them, was what carried

“ a rebellion in it, and was an high treason against the King of
 “ the theocracy, an iniquity to be punished by the judge ! At
 “ the same time, sojourners in the land were not compelled un-
 “ to the keeping of those laws and rites, which Moses had given
 “ to his people. Nay, and the Israelites themselves, fell many
 “ of them into the worst of heresies. Yet, whilst they kept the
 “ law and rites of Moses, the magistrate would not meddle with
 “ them. The heresy of the Sadducees struck at the foundation
 “ of all religion. Yet we do not find, that our Saviour blamed
 “ the Pharisees for not persecuting them, as they could have
 “ done. The Christian religion brings us not into a temporal
 “ Canaan. It knows no designs ; it has no weapons, but what
 “ are purely spiritual.” And indeed he was not singular : the
 generality or most eminent of the New-England ministers at
 length found reason for adopting these or the like sentiments ;—
 sentiments very different from those which their own noncon-
 forming ancestors, who first went over to those places of the
 world, held ; and according to which they, for a considerable
 time, rigorously acted in their little colonies *.

P. S. Having had so frequent occasion in this letter to men-
 tion the acts of parliament imposing the covenants in the peri-
 od between 1638 and 1650, I beg leave to refresh your memory
 with a short account of them.—The general assembly 1639,
 “ considering that there resteth nothing for crowning his Ma-
 “ jesty’s incomparable goodness towards them, but that all the
 “ members of this kirk and kingdom be joined in one and the
 “ same confession and covenant with God, with the King’s
 “ Majesty, and among themselves,” (language, in my view, more
 adapted to the genius of the Jewish theocracy, than the gospel-
 constitution) ;—“ they humbly supplicate his Grace, his Ma-
 “ jesty’s Commissioner, and the Lords of privy council, to enjoin
 “ by act of council, that this confession and covenant be sub-
 “ scribed by all his Majesty’s subjects, of what rank and quality
 “ soever.” Which supplication being granted them,—“ they,
 “ by their act and constitution ecclesiastical, approve said cove-
 “ nant, in all the heads and clauses thereof, and ordain of new,
 “ under all ecclesiastical censure, that it be sworn and subscribed
 “ by all the members of this kirk and kingdom.”—And then
 they go on, “ to supplicate his Majesty’s High Commissioner,
 “ and the Honourable estates of parliament, by their authority
 “ to ratify and enjoin the same, under all civil pains,” (a strange-
 like supplication from the professed ministers of the Prince of
 Peace, pretending to act in his name, and by his authority) :

* See the account of the difference between the Antiburgher-Seceders and me, p. 24. 25. 26. in the notes.

—“ Which,” they say, “ will tend to the glory of God, the
 “ preservation of religion, the King’s Majesty’s honour, and
 “ the perfect peace of this kirk and kingdom.” This other sup-
 plication was also granted them by act 5. sess. 1. parl. 2. Char. I.
 1640 ; — which enacts, that “ said confession and covenant be
 “ subscribed by all his Majesty’s subjects, of what rank and qua-
 “ lity soever, under *all civil pains*.”—And yet, notwithstanding
 this heavy sanction hung over their heads, the covenanters were
 called to “ protest, and call the Searcher of all hearts to witness,
 “ that their minds and consciences did fully agree with this their
 “ confession, promise, oath, and subscription ; so that they were
 “ not moved with any worldly respect, but were persuaded on-
 “ ly in their consciences, through the knowledge and love of
 “ God’s true religion, imprinted in their hearts by the Holy
 “ Spirit,—as they should answer to him in the day when the
 “ secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed.”

In like manner, the solemn league and covenant, afterwards
 set on foot, was also imposed by civil authority under very heavy
 penalties. Hence that ordinance of the committee of estates, da-
 ted, Edinburgh, Oct. 12. 1643, “ for the solemn receiving,
 “ swearing, and subscribing of the solemn league and covenant ;”
 —which ordains, That “ it be, with all religious solemnity, sworn
 “ and subscribed by all his Majesty’s subjects within this king-
 “ dom ; and that under the pains, of such as shall postpone or
 “ refuse, to be esteemed and punished as enemies to religion, his
 “ Majesty’s honour, and peace of the kingdoms ; and to have
 “ their goods and rents confiscated for the use of the public ;
 “ and that they shall not bruik or enjoy any benefit, place, or of-
 “ fice within this kingdom : And also ordains all sheriffs, stew-
 “ arts, and others his Majesty’s magistrates to burgh and lands,
 “ and committees in several shires, to be assisting to ministers and
 “ presbyteries in procuring real obedience thereto ; and that,
 “ with all diligence, they make report to the committee of e-
 “ states, of the names of all such persons as shall postpone or re-
 “ fuse, to the effect course may be taken with them as aforesaid :
 “ and that they be cited to the next parliament, to receive what
 “ further punishment his Majesty and parliament shall inflict up-
 “ on them.” This ordinance of the committee was afterwards
 approved, ratified, and declared to have the full force of a law
 within this kingdom, by the estates of parliament, act 5. sess. 1.
 parl. 3. Charles I. 1644. — This is the act above referred unto.
 In pursuance of this ordinance, all the lords of the council were
 summoned to subscribe, Nov. 2. and those who did it not then,
 to appear again on the 14th day of the same month, under the se-
 verest penalties ;—when some not attending, were declared ene-
 mies to religion, their King, and their country. Nov. 17. their
 goods

goods were ordered to be seized, and their persons apprehended ; —whereupon they fled.

Thus was the swearing and subscribing of the covenants promoted and carried on in those days. And indeed, if these and the like laws were revived, I doubt not but national covenanting would go on as prosperously and successfully now, as it did then ; though, at the same time, I believe, it would not do so very long. And yet, notwithstanding these compulsory methods, Seceders confidently aver, that the taking and subscribing of the covenants in those days, was the fruit and effect of a plenteous downpouring of the Spirit upon all ranks and degrees of persons in this land. But how can it with certainty be known, that the generality of the people were moved to it by the Spirit of God, and not rather overawed into it by the penal statutes, or influenced by the hope of temporal rewards ? the offices and honours of the civil state being then annexed unto it ; especially as, in a few years after, the scales being turned, the bulk and body of the nation as readily abjured the covenants, as they had sworn them.— And moreover, they declare, that “ the remarkable countenance
“ which the Lord gave to the reforming and covenanting church
“ of Scotland, did excite their neighbours in England and Ire-
“ land to join with them in a solemn covenant, for maintaining,
“ advancing, and carrying on a work of reformation in the three
“ kingdoms,” *Test. p. 16.* I shall not take upon me to determine, whether this assertion be well founded or not ; but shall leave it with those, who are best acquainted with what historical evidence we have of the motives which seemed to have induced those who at that time had the lead in public affairs in the English nation, to fall in with the league ;—and the methods which they used for bringing the people into it, and a compliance with the several parts of the uniformity therein engaged unto. And as to Ireland, I suppose, it never had much footing there.— When reading the history of that period, I acknowledge, matters appeared to me in quite another light : yea, I was not able to help suspecting, that mere political reasons and sinister views influenced the English politicians to comply with the Scots in the affair of the solemn league.



L E T T E R X.

S I R,

THIS morning my thoughts happened to turn upon that very ancient declaration of enmity and war between the serpent and his seed, and the woman and her seed, Gen. iii. 15. I was led to think, how soon open hostilities commenced upon
the

the back of that declaration; an early instance whereof we have recorded in Adam's own family: for Cain, *who was of that wicked one*, that is, of the serpent's seed, rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him: *And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*, Gen. iv. 8. with 1 John iii. 12. I also considered how it has all along subsisted, and, in some one shape or other, wrought and discovered itself throughout the several ages and periods of the world, until the present time. It did so in the old world before the flood;—and also, in the new world, or after the flood. It appeared and operated in the patriarchal age; yea, even in the family of Abraham, the father of the faithful: for Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Upon which, Paul gives this comment,—*He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit*, Gal. iv. 29.—How visibly did it subsist and work throughout the several periods of the Jewish church and nation, which God adopted and took for his peculiar people,—in the wars which the neighbouring nations were almost incessantly raising and carrying on against them! For so had the Lord commanded concerning Jacob, *that his adversaries should be round about him*, Lam. i. 17. Compare to this purpose Psal. lxxxiii. 2.—8. *For lo, thine enemies make a tumult; and they that hate thee, have lift up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against thee. The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarens, &c.* This, I think, may be viewed as an emblem of the enmity and ill-will, which the world lying in wickedness, or under the wicked one, bears to the people of God, the true spiritual Israel, in all ages and periods. As it was then, or under the old dispensation; so is it now:—*They who are born after the flesh, persecute them who are born after the Spirit*;—as in the forecited Gal. iv. 29.—The enmity of the serpent and his seed at the woman and her seed, that is, the spiritual and believing seed of Christ, is not ceased. So far from it, that the dragon or old serpent, that is, the devil, *persecutes the woman*: he casts out of his mouth water as a flood after her, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood; he is wroth with her, and makes war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, Rev. xii. 13. 15. 17.

It does not appear, that, under the gospel, God takes any one whole nation for his peculiar people, likeas he did the nation

tion of the ancient Israel, whom, as a nation, and in that capacity, he brought into a covenant of peculiarity with himself, until the promised seed should come ; but rather, that he gathers his peculiar people, or New-testament Israel, from among all nations and people, without distinction. To this agree these words of James, Acts xv. 14. *God did visit the Gentiles or nations, to take out of them a people for his name.* And therefore, the Redeemer actually incarnate would not seem to reign over any one nation and kingdom of this world, in its national capacity, as his peculiar kingdom ; but rather among many, Is. ii. 4. that is, the subjects of his spiritual and peculiar kingdom are gathered out from among many nations and people ; compare Rev. v. 9. and vii. 9. And where-ever he thus reigns and rules, it is *in the midst of his enemies*, Psal. cx. 2. In whatever nation or kingdom of this world he sets up his special and peculiar kingdom ; there is ground to think, that, in the present state of things, he will *there* reign and rule in the midst of his enemies ;—and so, that the adversaries of his subjects will be round about them, even in the same nation and kingdom. In every country where Christianity is professed, I suppose, the warfare between the serpent and his seed, and Christ and his seed, will still be less or more visible. This is so much the case, that an inspired writer has assured us, that *all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12. Although, by the over-ruling providence of God, they should be secured from hand-persecution, — from imprisonment, banishment, confiscation of goods, &c. ; yet they must lay their account with, at least, tongue-persecution, the trial of cruel mockings, reproaches, &c. And thus they need *not marvel, though the world hate them*, 1 John iii. 13. Compare John xv. 18.—21. *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before that it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own ; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you, &c.* If, therefore, any, in whatever age or place of the world, will come after Christ, they *must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him* ; that is, follow him in the way of self-denial, and patient bearing of the cross, particularly, the reproach of Christ ;—which is no agreeable thing to flesh and blood : thus, in some one way or other, *going forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach*, Heb. xiii. 13.

This train of thought led me to think of renewing my correspondence with you ; and particularly, of taking under consideration what you have been pleased to offer upon that which I “ further question” concerning “ the first of the petitions in “ matters somewhat political, namely, — What is meant by the “ covenanted

"covenanted reformation being brought *into repute*?" And your commentary upon what I say here, appears to me somewhat evasive. "As to which," say you, "he plainly teaches, that it is unwarrantable to pray for any such thing, about the uncorrupted cause of Christ, considering what the scripture represents as the state of it in this world." — You have not contradicted what I there gave out, or questioned about, as the scripture-representation of the state of the uncorrupted cause of Christ in this world, *viz.* as being, for the most part, a despised cause,—a steadfast adherence whereunto does rather expose persons to reproach and suffering, than raise them to honour and reputation, in the present state of things. Nor indeed could you, without at the same time depriving Seceders of "one of the evidences," (and such an one too, as you seem to lay no small stress upon), that "the Lord's C A U S E is among them, that the LORD himself is with them." Upon the supposition of this being the scripture-account of the state of the uncorrupted cause of Christ in this world, I asked, — *What great ground is there to expect its being brought into repute throughout whole nations and kingdoms as such?* Which certainly must be the meaning of the petition, as appears from what has been before declared. Now, have you pointed out so much as one scripture-ground for expecting, that the uncorrupted cause of Christ is to be *so* brought into repute? that is, among three whole nations and kingdoms of this world, together with the great men and politicians thereof? And, if there be not sufficient scripture-grounds and warrants for such an expectation; how can those of your way pray in faith to such an effect?

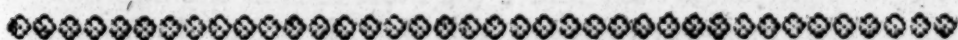
"Yet the Seceders," add you, "can see no inconsistency of this, with believing that *the Lord shall build up Zion*, and that *then he shall appear in his glory*; or with praying that he may *do so*."—And, I assure you, as little can I: yea, I see a perfect consistency between these two. But, though we be here agreed in sounds; it is hard to say, but we might differ in sense, if we were coming to close quarters as to the meaning of the Bible-words here used, as applied to the gospel-state of things: at least, I am sure, I understand the building up of gospel-Zion, or the New-testament church, and the glory wherein God appears unto men in so doing, in a sense somewhat different from that, in which these things have been understood, both by Seceders in the present period, and by not a few of our covenanting ancestors in the last century. The truth is, I do not understand the former, of building up a kind of Jewish theocracy, or secular sort of kingdom to the Messiah;—a new modelling of the civil constitution of a kingdom of this world,—a purging of kings courts, parliaments, and other civil judicatories,

armies,

armies, navies, &c. : nor the latter, of the pompous parade of kings and parliaments acting in or towards the church and kingdom of Christ, in their kingly and parliamentary capacity. Upon this, however, I shall not presently insist.

The last clause in this paragraph, I suppose, is intended as a declaration of what you mean by "*the Lord's building up Zion,*" and *appearing in his glory,*" viz. "removing all the infamy, which our covenanted reformation, and the testimonies for it that have been sealed by the blood of many martyrs, are lying under in this generation." I cannot so well say, whether we will agree in this explication, or not, till you be pleased to declare, what you mean by "the covenanted reformation itself," hitherto undefined, unexplained; save only, that, in the general, it is declared to be "a matter somewhat political." Only, it may be observed, agreeably to what has been already hinted, that supposing this so much insisted upon covenanted reformation to be in very deed the uncorrupted cause of Christ; I am not yet satisfied with respect to a sufficiency of scripture-ground for expecting "all the infamy it lies under in this generation, being removed," in the present state of things.—The mentioning of "the testimonies sealed with the blood of many martyrs," is indeed a very popular stroke: but, after some things you have advanced in your letter, I cannot let myself believe, you will so much as pretend to hold, at least some parts of the testimonies of some of our Scotch martyrs in the last century, especially toward the latter end thereof, — in their full latitude and extent, their obvious drift and tendency.

But, that I may not always encroach upon your patience with long letters,—I shall conclude, &c.



L E T T E R X I.

S I R,

THere is no accounting for the reveries and flights which our minds sometimes take. Admitting that principle, (which, for aught I know, you do), *Mens humana semper cogitat*; it is reasonable to think, that it will have a variety of objects to ruminate upon. — Lately, I was thinking of the art of printing; and how beneficial it is to mankind. It is of special use for promoting knowledge,—the knowledge of the arts and sciences, and other necessary things: For, by this means, studious, penetrating sort of people, like yourself, have ready access to communicate their thoughts upon "matters" either "wholly religious," or "somewhat political;" not only unto a few select friends, but unto the public itself. Whence, knowledge comes

“covenanted reformation being brought *into repute*?” And your commentary upon what I say here, appears to me somewhat evasive. “As to which,” say you, “he plainly teaches, “that it is unwarrantable to pray for any such thing, about the “uncorrupted cause of Christ, considering what the scripture “represents as the state of it in this world.”—You have not contradicted what I there gave out, or questioned about, as the scripture-representation of the state of the uncorrupted cause of Christ in this world, *viz.* as being, for the most part, a despised cause,—a steadfast adherence whereunto does rather expose persons to reproach and suffering, than raise them to honour and reputation, in the present state of things. Nor indeed could you, without at the same time depriving Seceders of “one of “the evidences,” (and such an one too, as you seem to lay no small stress upon), that “the Lord’s C A U S E is among them, “that the L O R D himself is with them.” Upon the supposition of this being the scripture-account of the state of the uncorrupted cause of Christ in this world, I asked, — *What great ground is there to expect its being brought into repute throughout whole nations and kingdoms as such?* Which certainly must be the meaning of the petition, as appears from what has been before declared. Now, have you pointed out so much as one scripture-ground for expecting, that the uncorrupted cause of Christ is to be *so* brought into repute? that is, among three whole nations and kingdoms of this world, together with the great men and politicians thereof? And, if there be not sufficient scripture-grounds and warrants for such an expectation; how can those of your way pray in faith to such an effect?

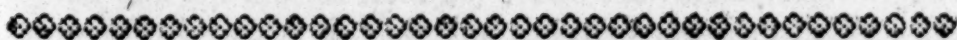
“Yet the Seceders,” add you, “can see no inconsistency of “this, with believing that *the Lord shall build up Zion*, and that “then *he shall appear in his glory*; or with praying that he may “do so.”—And, I assure you, as little can I: yea, I see a perfect consistency between these two. But, though we be here agreed in sounds; it is hard to say, but we might differ in sense, if we were coming to close quarters as to the meaning of the Bible-words here used, as applied to the gospel-state of things: at least, I am sure, I understand the building up of gospel-Zion, or the New-testament church, and the glory wherein God appears unto men in so doing, in a sense somewhat different from that, in which these things have been understood, both by Seceders in the present period, and by not a few of our covenanting ancestors in the last century. The truth is, I do not understand the former, of building up a kind of Jewish theocracy, or secular sort of kingdom to the Messiah;—a new modelling of the civil constitution of a kingdom of this world,—a purging of kings courts, parliaments, and other civil judicatories,

armies,

armies, navies, &c. : nor the latter, of the pompous parade of kings and parliaments acting in or towards the church and kingdom of Christ, in their kingly and parliamentary capacity: Upon this, however, I shall not presently insist.

The last clause in this paragraph, I suppose, is intended as a declaration of what you mean by "*the Lord's building up Zion,*" and *appearing in his glory,*" viz. "removing all the infamy, which our covenanted reformation, and the testimonies for it that have been sealed by the blood of many martyrs, are lying under in this generation." I cannot so well say, whether we will agree in this explication, or not, till you be pleased to declare, what you mean by "the covenanted reformation itself," hitherto undefined, unexplained; save only, that, in the general, it is declared to be "a matter somewhat political." Only, it may be observed, agreeably to what has been already hinted, that supposing this so much insisted upon covenanted reformation to be in very deed the uncorrupted cause of Christ; I am not yet satisfied with respect to a sufficiency of scripture-ground for expecting "all the infamy it lies under in this generation, being removed," in the present state of things.—The mentioning of "the testimonies sealed with the blood of many martyrs," is indeed a very popular stroke: but, after some things you have advanced in your letter, I cannot let myself believe, you will so much as pretend to hold, at least some parts of the testimonies of some of our Scotch martyrs in the last century, especially toward the latter end thereof, — in their full latitude and extent, their obvious drift and tendency.

But, that I may not always encroach upon your patience with long letters,—I shall conclude, &c.



L E T T E R X I.

S I R,

THere is no accounting for the reveries and flights which our minds sometimes take. Admitting that principle. (which, for aught I know, you do), *Mens humana semper cogitat*; it is reasonable to think, that it will have a variety of objects to ruminate upon. — Lately, I was thinking of the art of printing; and how beneficial it is to mankind. It is of special use for promoting knowledge,—the knowledge of the arts and sciences, and other necessary things: For, by this means, studious, penetrating sort of people, like yourself, have ready access to communicate their thoughts upon "matters" either "wholly religious," or "somewhat political;" not only unto a few select friends, but unto the public itself. Whence, knowledge comes

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to increase. I have sometimes thought it worthy of notice, that the all-wise providence of God brought about the discovery of this art before the reformation from Popery; inasmuch as it seems to have been not a little subservient unto the spreading of reformation-light.—Toleration, and liberty of the press, render this important invention still more extensively useful. Here I am reminded, how that, by the over-ruling providence of God, good is sometimes brought out of evil. However grievous and evil the national apostasy, particularly that of our civil rulers, from the solemn-league uniformity, should be; yet this good fruit has followed upon it, namely, greater liberty of the press. Had you and I lived in the covenanting period between 1638 and 1650, if I be not greatly mistaken, neither of us durst have published some things contained or implied in our letters in the Magazine. It is owing to (what some will call) the badness of the times, that we have this liberty.—It is true, the best of things may be abused; and so may liberty of the press too: yea, I am persuaded, that, in sundry instances, it has been grossly abused.—Besides other inconveniencies that may follow upon it; heretical, sectarian, and latitudinarian tenets, get leave to be published: But then there is this advantage, that the orthodox, the strict national uniformists, &c. have the same liberty of publicly producing their arguments, for the conviction of those adversaries, or stopping the mouths of such as may oppose themselves. A method of convincing, or of stopping the mouths of gainsayers, fully as consonant both to scripture and reason, as civil pains, or the magistrates punishing and suppressing heretics, sectarians, &c. with the terrors of this world;—which our covenanting ancestors were so fond of, and whereunto they brought their magistrates under the most solemn ties and obligations.—This method, I am not insensible, is attended with much more trouble and pains unto the clergy, or church-ministers; but since, in national churches at least, they are paid by the government for attending to, and managing the religious affairs of the nation; why should they not ease the government of the burden of silencing such as may think proper to object unto some parts of the national profession? especially as the civil rulers have enough ado, without that additional trouble.—But I must recall my imagination from this excursion.

“The second of the petitions, in matters somewhat political, is,—That the Lord would hasten the time, when our civil magistrates should become nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church.” And, say you,—“Here are modes of expression which I cannot believe were ever heard out of the mouth of any Seceding preacher.” Here you come to give the explanation you had promised before. You do not pretend

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to except unto any other of the petitions, and modes of expression specified. Well, what are the modes of expression here excepted unto? For aught that I can learn from your letter, they are just these two, "hasten the time," and "should be come," which you have set down in different characters. Now, supposing I should have been thus far mistaken, (which, however, I am not yet convinced of); I cannot see, how this supposed mistake of mine sets the Seceders in a much more disadvantageous light. You grant, that "sometimes indeed they use" the scripture-expressions, (Is. xlix. 23.), praying that kings "*may be made* nursing-fathers, and their queens nursing-mothers, to the church." But will you venture to refuse, that ever Seceding preachers, instead of the general terms, "kings" and "their queens," use these,—*our civil rulers*, or some others such like? thereby meaning the powers that presently be in Great Britain: thus,—praying that *our* civil rulers and magistrates (that is, the *present* British ones), "*may be made*," or become nursing fathers to the church. I hope, you will not. And, if you will not; pray, where is the great difference between your own account of the Seceders prayers on this head, and mine? For my part, I have not penetration enough to discern it.—The reason you assign for their not using such a mode of expression in prayer, namely, "that the Lord would *hasten the time* when our civil magistrates *should become* as mentioned," is,—because it would suppose or imply, that "no such time were yet come,—a supposition grossly inconsistent with their professed principles." I readily grant, that such a supposition would be as you say, that is, inconsistent with their professed principles. For who doubts of its being very consistent with the hitherto-professed principles of Seceders, to suppose and affirm, that such a time was come in the days of Constantine, and other Roman emperors; or that they acted the part of nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church?—while they bestowed liberal benefices upon the clergy, and raised them unto worldly wealth and grandeur;—while they annexed the imperial sanction unto their deeds and determinations, whether belonging to faith, or to the discipline and government of the church;—while they punished and suppressed heretics, disturbers of the peace of the church, &c. or such as the clergy declared so to be; and so forth of the like ways.—Some indeed, who have not been so fond of high church-power, have been hardy enough to affirm, that thereby a foundation was laid for the rise and progress of the man of sin, described, 2 Thess. ii. But then, it is well known, that by their so affirming, or venturing tenets of such a dangerous tendency to the church, that is, to the temporal wealth and power of churchmen; they expo-

fed themselves to the heavy censures of the more orthodox of different denominations, Presbyterians themselves not excepted.

Again, who doubts of its being fully consistent with their professed and sworn-to principles, to suppose and affirm, that our own rulers also, several times since the reformation from Popery, have acted the part of nurse-fathers to the church? — in so far as they walked in the aforementioned steps of the Roman powers: not only providing the ministers in at least moderate livings; but also passing many laudable acts and statutes,—for the rooting out of heretics and enemies of the true worship of God; —for obliging all his Majesty's subjects to communicate in the Lord's supper once a-year at least;—for arming the church courts and censures with a coercive and punitive power,—punishing them civilly who would not submit to their jurisdiction and authority, —and confiscating the goods of such as happened to be excommunicated for *any cause whatever*; putting them to the horn, and denouncing them his Majesty's rebels, at least if they did not profess themselves penitent within a certain limited space of time; —imposing the covenants as aforesaid, &c.—Yea, it is not doubted, but it is consistent with their principles to suppose and affirm, that even K. Charles I. (who, it is well known, was no great friend to the covenanted reformation) acted such a part, when, for his own political and state reasons, he came to Scotland, and “countenanced the last session of that parliament” (which ratified the covenanted reformation, and imposed the national covenant as above) “with his own presence,” *Test. p. 16.*; and, of his royal goodness, augmented the livings of such of the ministers as then had the greatest lead in public affairs.—Thus far, then, you and I are agreed. But then we differ in this, that I do not see how a praying for hastening the time when our present British powers should become as mentioned, necessarily supposes or implies, that such a time has never yet been. For might not such a time have been, though the present be not such? Might not the forementioned Roman powers, and also the Scotch powers in former times, have acted the part of nursing-fathers to the church, although our present powers do not? Particularly, may not our powers in the period between 1638 and 1650 be acknowledged to have acted such a part? —inasmuch as they countenanced and encouraged the covenanted reformation, ratified it in the strongest terms by law; enforcing it with their sanctions of temporal rewards and punishments;—although the present British rulers be not so acknowledged, who, according to Seceders, openly contradict their duty this way, and keep that great work lying buried under the grave-stone of sundry parliamentary acts and deeds.

Whereas I put “this question about the petition presently un-
der

“ der consideration,” — *Does not this plainly suppose, that the powers which presently be in G. Britain are not so, viz. nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church?* you answer, “ It may do so, as he has laid it; but not, as Seceders use it.” After all that you have said, I must still think, that said petition, even as used by Seceders, plainly supposes thus much. If the mode of expression had been,—that our rulers might *more and more* be made or become nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church,—I grant, that would in so far have altered the case: but this is not pretended by yourself. And here I beg leave to observe, that though the preacher did indeed make prayers, supplications, and intercessions for our King and rulers, such as those mentioned, or the like; yet, so far as I remember, thanksgivings were not joined with them: nor, to the best of my knowledge, is any such thing common to those of your way. If therefore, as you give out, they acknowledge our present rulers to be nursing-fathers to the church; why do they not offer up thanksgivings unto God on this account?

“ They [Seceders] will,” say you, “ as readily as he can, allow those characters [nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church] to the powers which presently be in G. Britain.” But how can this be? To adopt your own phraseology;—“ Here are modes of expression which I cannot believe were ever heard out of the mouth of any Seceding preacher; or, if any one has ever used such language, I am sure, it is not common to those of that way!” What! Seceders talk of the present British powers as nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church:—I appeal to those who are best acquainted with them, if this be common dialect among them. And, indeed, how can it consistently be so?—while they, in their judicative capacity, grant, “ That they are justly chargeable with the want of qualifications necessary by the word of God and our covenants;”—yea, solemnly vote and declare, that they “ have not only neglected, but contradicted their duty, of espousing and supporting the covenanted principles and reformation of this church, whereby they have greatly provoked the Lord to anger:”—That, “ by our ancient and fundamental laws, and by the covenants, our kings are obliged, not only to profess and preserve the reformed religion of the church of Scotland, but also to reform England and Ireland from Prelacy and superstition: yet, by the present constitution, our kings not only may be of the religion of the church of England, but are expressly obliged to swear, to maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the church of England, and the doctrine, worship, and discipline thereof as by law established, within the kingdoms of England and Ireland:”—That, “ under the present
“ constitution,

“ constitution, a mighty bar is thrust into the way of our covenanted reformation, both in church and state ; yea, a grave-stone is laid, and established upon the same,” &c. *Answers to Mr Nairn*, p. 11. 45. 51. where also much more to the same purpose may be found. How then can “ Seceders allow the powers which presently be in G. Britain, to be nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church ? ” — that is, the covenanting and reforming church of these lands ; or, in other words, the churches in Scotland, England, and Ireland, formed upon the solemn-league plan.

And further ; “ As great strangers are they [Seceders] unto the modes of expression, — of allowing to the powers which presently be those characters, — so far as they protect people of different, yea opposite denominations of religion, who be have themselves as good and peaceable subjects of the civil state, from outward violence in the exercise of their religion ; not only defending them in the enjoyment of their civil properties in general, but in special, that precious natural right of mankind, liberty of conscience, also : ” Or, what would become of that main point of their testimony, — a strict national uniformity in religion, without toleration ? — For the support of what you had above declared concerning the Seceders, you quote a clause from said *Answers*, in these words : — “ Security is given by the present civil government unto our religious lives and liberties, such as no other people now on earth enjoys the like.” The principles of Seceders must not certainly be taken from detached clauses and half-sentences of their standards ; but these must be understood in their connection, and in a consistency with the declared scope and design of the whole. With this clause you may be pleased to compare some of the last-cited passages from the same book. But what I chiefly mean to observe here, is, that although I do not pretend to be well acquainted with the British constitution ; yet I apprehend, that, properly speaking, the only or principal “ security given by the present civil government for the religious liberties ” of dissenters (such as Seceders are) lies in the toleration. Such indeed is the humanity and mildness of our present civil rulers, that, though there were no toleration-act, I flatter myself, they would indulge and wink at such of their good and peaceable subjects as cannot in all points conform to the established religion ; at least, if they were not instigated and stirred up by malevolent persons, by some ambitious and aspiring churchmen, or other. But then, without the positive or legal toleration, I do not see how, with any manner of propriety, such security as is mentioned, could be said to be given by our present civil government for the religious liberties of dissenters. Without it, I do think,

think, there would be no legal security for them at all. Were it not for this, I suppose, all the dissenting meeting-houses in Britain, and those of Seceders among the rest, might be shut up, at the magistrates mere will and pleasure. Since, then, Seceders openly disavow, yea swear away the toleration, as a public national sin; it is not easy to see, what they mean by this declaration;—unless it should be, that they themselves are the only denomination in Britain, who are entitled to “security—for their religious lives and liberties.” But, no doubt, their fellow dissenting subjects will reckon themselves equally entitled hereunto.

Under this head, I further questioned,—*How does the preacher understand the passage of the prophet to which this petition seems to refer?* Unto which you reply,—“I can answer him for all the “Seceders,” &c. With all due deference to your better judgment, I humbly think, you should not be so confident in answering for all the Seceders with regard to matters of this sort. I have given one reason for my so thinking in a former letter; and shall now give you another. — It has again and again been insinuated in a very public manner, that, as a compensation for your great usefulness and importance in the Secession-cause, you are invested with a supremacy over the whole Associate Anti-burgher body. I indeed once saw a printed act of the Synod bearing a title of that import: but as it did not appear, that said act was published by the authority of the court, and as the body of the act was not conceived in these express terms, (however it might be inferred therefrom *by a train of logical reasonings*); I was disposed to consider it, as of the sarcastical and reproachful kind. But really such a confident answer for the whole body, as to the meaning of a text of scripture, is calculated for tempting people to think, that there is some ground for these insinuations; especially such people as have not access to know of the parity of pastors (I will not say, on all occasions practically observed, but) in words held, and professed among Seceders.

The answer you give to the above question for them all is,—“that they do not understand it as *necessarily* meaning, that, in order to *any* answering the characters of nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers, the kings and queens *must* be church-members or Christians.” — Whether this answer be pertinent and satisfactory, or not; it is plainly of the negative, and, in my view, the ambiguous sort. Would not your answer have been fully as plain and easily understood, if you had answered positively, that they understand said passage of the prophet in the same sense, in which it is explained and interpreted in the Scotch Confession, art. 25.; in some clauses of the second book of discipline, chap. 1. 10. and the Westminster Confession, chap.

20. sect. 6. and chap. 23. sect. 3. where it is plain, the compilers mean, to give the sense of the passage of the prophet referred to; at least, they bring it in in support of the part which, they there teach, the Christian magistrate ought to act toward the church. And, I persuade myself, you will know some reason for not refusing, that Seceders do, in the most solemn manner, adopt the sense there given.—But, to attend to your own answer, such as it is;—the question is not concerning “any answering of the character of nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers,” in a very scrimp and defective sense; but concerning a *suitable, adequate, and laudable* answering of said character, in its full latitude and extent. Neither is the question merely concerning such an answering of it, as may in some cases be found in kings and queens who are not “church-members or Christians;” but concerning that answering of it, which is supposed to be incumbent upon the *Christian magistrate*, or the magistrate so called. For it is well known, that sundry of our divines, who by Seceders are reckoned most orthodox on this point, such as the London ministers, &c. have granted, as you do, that Heathen magistrates may in so far answer the character of nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church; while, at the same time, they plead for a great deal more as necessarily incumbent upon Christian magistrates, (not merely “those who are such,” but “as they are such”), in order to their rightly or suitably answering that character;—as much fully, if I mistake not, as any thing expressed or implied in my queries, under this head. For do they not seem evidently to represent the magistrate called Christian, as sitting on the throne of David, and his successors in office; and to assign unto him much the same part in or toward the New-testament church, with that which these were bound to act in the Jewish church?—As if the peculiar office and work of Jewish rulers as such, had its issue and accomplishment, not in the kingly office and government of Jesus Christ, but in the lords of the Gentiles, the rulers of the nations and kingdoms of this world, upon their embracing Christianity. Yea, does not the doctrine of the church of Scotland, in her public standards, seem to look very much this way? At least, I am sure, a great many worthy ministers of that church, both in former and latter times, have understood it so. And to this purpose it is observable, that the part there assigned unto the Christian magistrate, with reference unto gospel-churches, and the peculiar affairs thereof, is, for the most part, inferred from, and rested upon, the part which these others acted in the Jewish church.—Besides, it must be acknowledged, that some few instances are to be met with of civil magistrates, who were not church-members, fully going all the lengths

lengths "questioned about" in mine,—in a way of answering the character of nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers to the church; such as, some "of the kings of Persia," mentioned by yourself, who were not members of the Jewish church; and of latter times, our own King Charles I. who, though no member of the covenanting church of Scotland, yet, as was before hinted, ratified the covenanted "reformation begun anno 1638, "in the strongest terms by law, and countenanced the last session of the parliament which did so, with his own presence." And therefore, although Seceders should "not understand it " [that passage of the prophet] as necessarily meaning, that, in "order to any answering of the character of nursing-fathers and "nursing-mothers, the kings and queens *must be* church-members, or Christians;"—it will not thence follow, that they do not adopt the sense of it, which I "question about."

The Seceders, add you, "will not scruple to acknowledge, "with Mr Henry,—that the promise referred to had some accomplishment to the Jewish church; so far as divers of the "kings of Persia were very tender of their interests, countenanced and encouraged them, as Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes." Artaxerxes, in particular, countenanced and encouraged the Jewish church, in a way of imposing (for aught I know, upon the people of the Jews only) their religion, under the pains of imprisonment, confiscation of goods, banishment, and death itself, Ezra vii. 26. which thing God put into the king's heart, verse 27.; that so, as I take it, he might, on that occasion, act the special and peculiar part of a Jewish magistrate toward that church and people. Now, I would ask, if you and your brethren, when praying for the accomplishment of the promise under consideration, with regard to the New-testament church in general, or the covenanting church of Scotland in particular, mean such an accomplishment of it, as that which took place in this instance of Artaxerxes?—that is, if they mean, that our civil rulers should impose upon all their subjects the Christian religion, or that particular profession of it which Seceders judge best,—under the same temporal pains and evils? And I have a particular reason for asking this; which is as follows:—Not only do the Westminster-assembly of divines, in part, infer from this decree of Artaxerxes, the place and power which they assign unto the Christian magistrate concerning the church within his dominions; but, I understand, some Seceding clergymen, of no small weight and reputation, have urged it in vindication of the measure taken in the memorable period between 1638 and 1650,—of imposing the covenants upon all his Majesty's subjects, of whatever quality, rank, or degree, under all civil pains;—pleading said decree, as a precedent to be imi-

rated by magistrates under the gospel. And, though this was done in the presence and hearing of a number of the clergy of that way, it was observed, that it "met not with a syllable of "contradiction from any of them."

From all that is above said, I hope, it will appear, that you have no great ground for being so much offended at me, for having further questioned on this head, as follows:—*Or, over and above all this, (that is, protecting and defending good and peaceable subjects in the free exercise of their religion, paying ministers stipends, &c.), in order to our rulers being right nurse-fathers to the church *, would it also be necessary to impose the Secession-scheme, as stated and laid out in the judicial testimony, and sworn to in the bond reduplicating upon the long historical narrative in the acknowledgment of sins thereto prefixed, upon all his Majesty's subjects, of whatever quality, rank, or degree, under all civil pains;—and forcibly to suppress, or root out of their lands and empire, all those the ministers of the Secession might think proper to adjudge Heretics, Sectarians, Latitudinarians, &c.?* For, sure, it is very agreeable to the received and sworn-to principles of Seceders, to have the true religion corroborated and enforced with the civil magistrate's sanction. And what, according to them, can be the true religion, but their own scheme laid out as above? And, sure, it is no less agreeable to their principles, forcibly to suppress, and root out, all heretics, &c. This necessarily follows upon the former. Wherefore, I shall only further remind you, that they judicially record, and bear honourable testimony unto, what they call, "the deed of civil "constitution, set upon a reformed footing by act 8. parl. 1. James VI.; which they quote at large, and part whereof follows:—"Because that the increase of vertew, and suppressing of

* It is not my present design particularly to inquire into all the various ways the kings and queens, on the supposition of their being Christians, may, consistently enough with the nature of their office, and the rights of the subject, answer that character, or prove useful to the church.

That the Protestant powers, both our own and others, have in various instances since the reformation done so, is readily admitted.—So far as they tolerated the reformed religion, and protected their subjects in the free exercise thereof, in opposition to the unjust and tyrannical claims of the Pope of Rome, and that even in a way of repelling force with force, the military force of the kings who gave their power unto the beast with force of a like nature; was certainly laudable, and necessarily incumbent on them as magistrates, upon the principle of defending the natural rights of their subjects, whereof liberty of conscience is a very precious one. But their afterwards binding it upon all their subjects by penal laws, is what I am not able to justify.

"idolatry,

“ idolatry, craves that the prince and the people be of ane per-
 “ fite religioun, quhilk of God’s mercy is now presently pro-
 “ fessed within this realme: Theirfore it is statute and ordained,
 “ be our Soveraine, my Lord Regent, and three estaites of this
 “ present parliament, that all kinges and princes, or magistrates
 “ whatsoever, halding their places, quhilkis hereafter, in ony
 “ time, fall happen to reigne, and beare rule over this realme, at
 “ the time of their coronatioun, and receipt of their princely
 “ authoritie,—make their faithfull promise be aith, in the pre-
 “ sence of the eternall God,—that out of their landes and em-
 “ pyre they fall be careful to *rute out* all heretikes and enemies to
 “ the trew worship of God, that fall be convict be the true kirk
 “ of God of the foirsaidis crymes.” *Answers to Mr Nairn, &c.*
 p. 47. This passage of their standards may help us to judge of, or
 guess at the covenanted reformation and extirpation they are con-
 tending for.—You see, the rooting out of heretics, &c. here judi-
 cially recorded, and borne witness unto, is not a rooting of them
 out of the church only by means of the appointed discipline; but
 a rooting them out of the earthly kingdom by the secular arm;
 —whether indeed by death, or the gentler method of banish-
 ment, is not positively determined. And whereas the magi-
 strate is thus to root out all that shall be convicted or adjudged
 by the true kirk of God so to be; who, according to Seceders,
 can be the true kirk of God, the true reforming and covenant-
 ing kirk of Scotland; that is to say, its true kirk-representative;
 —but the Associate Antiburgher Synod? especially, after they
 have judicially “ found and declared, that the present judica-
 “ tories of this national church are not lawful nor right-consti-
 “ tute courts of Christ;”—and also, that their Burgher-brethren,
 by reason of their attachment to the religious clause in some
 burghers-oaths, “ have forfeited and fallen from all right and ti-
 “ tle unto the exercise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”
 Doubtless, therefore, in their view, the civil magistrate ought
 thus to root out all those, whom the ministers of that way, met
 together in a judicative capacity, may think proper to pro-
 nounce heretics, &c. Pray, then, where does the hideousness
 of this part of “ my representation of the Seceders” lie?—
 And so I am, &c.

P. S. From some of the above-mentioned, and many other
 passages of your standard-books, it is obvious, that “ the cove-
 “ nanted reformation itself,” contended for by Seceders, (a-
 greeably to the account you have given of the general nature of
 it, as being “ a matter somewhat political),” is not merely a
 church-reformation, a reformation in those things belonging
 or peculiar to the churches of the saints; but a civil or state re-

formation, (a phrase very frequently used in the Answers to Mr Nairn),—a reformation of kings courts, privy councils, parliaments, and all inferior civil courts of judicature, burghs, armies, and navies, as such;—purging out therefrom, all such as will not swear the covenants, and, in all points, conform to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, therein covenanted. To this purpose, it is observable, that the Associate Presbytery, both in their Testimony, and Answers to Mr Nairn, largely insist upon, what they call, the civil or state reformation attained unto in this land, in the period between 1638 and 1650; and declare, that they reckon themselves bound in duty to lift up a testimony for the several steps thereof, and against the nation's present apostasy therefrom. This is evidently a very leading and material part of your testimony;—but, really, I cannot understand this part of it. I doubt not, but the body politic, or civil community, have a right to take care, that both the civil constitution and administration be so reformed and adjusted, or set on such a footing, as shall appear best for their temporal advantage, and the security of their natural rights and liberties; particularly, their right to judge in religion for themselves, and profess according to their own judgment, or the light of their own consciences,—and not be obliged to profess and practise according to the judgment of others, whether it be their own or not. This being obtained; the disciples of Christ, or professors of the true religion among them, will not fail of liberty to live quietly and peaceably in all godliness and honesty.—But then, what I have difficulty about is, how the ministers and disciples of Christ, as such, and in that capacity, come to lift up a testimony (which pretends to be the testimony of Jesus) for, or strive and contend about, a reformation of that kind; that is, the new-modelling of a kingdom of this world. It does not appear to me, that there is any countenance given hereunto, either by our Lord himself, the faithful and true Witness, or by his inspired apostles. Where do we find them intermeddling with the civil and military state of the Roman empire, and attempting a reformation or new-modelling thereof? As far as opportunity served, they exerted themselves, by means of the manifestation of the truth, for turning all sorts of men, individually considered, unto the Lord;—or for their being saved, and brought to the knowledge of the truth. And then, having joined professed believers in church-order, they warmly urged the churches, and several members thereof, stedfastly to continue in, and earnestly contend for, the faith once delivered to the saints,—to hold fast the true and uncorrupted doctrine of Christ, and the Christian worship and discipline, in their native purity and simplicity:—and when, in any instances, churches, or

particular

particular church-members, degenerated therefrom; they called them to repent and reform. But no where, as far as I remember, do we find them enjoining the churches to extend their testimony unto civil or state reformati^ons. The truth is, the apostles, and other primitive preachers of the gospel, seem not to have dealt "in matters political," further than just to teach the Christians to be in subjection unto the powers that were, in the places and countries where they lived. It does not at all seem to have been their design, to enter into civil politics, or in the least interfere with the rights, powers, and privileges of princes and their subjects; but to leave the political world just as they found it, — standing upon its own basis, and regulated by its own maxims.—The great business of church ministers and members as such, I think, is, in their several or respective spheres, to take good heed unto their own societies and communion;—to take special care, that those they admit, have the scripture-qualifications of church-members; and to purge out corrupt and unworthy members, upon their discovering themselves so to be:—*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble them, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau*;—see 1 Cor. v. Heb. xii. 15. 16. — Thus, leaving the purging of parliaments, and other civil courts of judicature, burghs, armies, and navies, &c. unto those to whom it properly appertains.

Upon the whole: According to the Secession-scheme, the ministers and members of the church and kingdom of Christ as such, or in that capacity, are to judge of and determine the rights of princes, or the necessary qualifications, religious qualifications at least, of those who ought to hold places and offices, civil and military, in the kingdoms of this world;—which, indeed, their great Lord and Master no where seems to have empowered them to do.—How hard is it to lay poor simple Christians under a necessity of declaring upon oath, who ought to be civil magistrates, and military men, in G. Britain, and who ought not!!! — viz. none but such as swear and subscribe the covenants. How they are in case to make such a solemn declaration in truth, judgment, and righteousness, —is not very easy to see. In what authority must their faith and persuasion be supposed to rest here?—human or divine?—I shall conclude this postscript with the following words of Mr Bradbury:— "I do not pretend to canvass the right of kingdoms; or poise the titles of princes. It is pity that ministers of the gospel should be grasping at a power of decision, which the world will never let them have, and Christ hath never bid them take.
" These

" These doctrines are not to be determined in pulpits, but in
 " parliaments." *Charge of God to Gideon, p. 36.*

L E T T E R XII.

S I R,

IT now remains, that I give you my thoughts upon what you have been pleased to offer concerning " the third of these petitions, — in matters somewhat political," namely, — " That the Lord would dispose our rulers to exert their power and influence for promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ." You propose to consider my " commentary upon this petition," in conjunction with what coincides with it in the rest. But the truth is, I think, you are mighty sparing in the consideration of it at all. I asked, — *What is meant by so praying?* Have you answered that? Immediately after that question about the meaning of the petition, I proposed this other, — *Can they, as civil rulers, (or in the exercise and exertion of that power proper and peculiar to them as such), use any other but carnal weapons, carnal power and policy, or temporal rewards and punishments, for this end?* — Have you answered this either? And here I would yet propose another question, — When Seceders thus pray concerning our civil rulers, do they not understand them as such, (not merely those *who are* such, but *as they are* such)? And, consequently, do they not understand the power they would have them to exert for the end mentioned, of that which is proper and peculiar to them as rulers or magistrates? that is, their office-power. And I insist, that you give a direct answer to each of these; namely, whether you understand that power you would have our rulers to exert, for promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ, of that which is proper to them as rulers? and then, whether, in the exercise of that power as such, they can use any other but carnal weapons, for the reaching of this end?

Here I am led to consider a very remarkable parenthesis of yours, the words whereof I mentioned a little ago. After you have disclaimed " all compulsory methods and magisterial ways of civil authority" in religion, you add, — " But an explication of the various and unexceptionable methods which are still competent to civil rulers (N. B. those *who are* such, not *as they are* such) in exerting their power and influence for promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ, consistently with the above principles," &c. — As to " the familiar allusion" you make use of " to illustrate the matter," namely, " praying
 " that

“ that the Carron-company might be disposed to promote the “ interests of morality and religion among their numerous dependents ; ” — I know not if you mean to add this unto the rest of the peculiar sort of petitions and modes of expression used by Seccders in prayer. But be that as it will, to me it does not appear pertinent to the purpose for which it is brought ; and therefore I shall pass it without any comment. — I know not what your meaning in this parenthesis can be, if this be not it, — that they who are magistrates may, yea even ought, in common with other Christians, to exert themselves for promoting and advancing the cause and kingdom of Christ in the world ; but not at all as they are magistrates, or in that capacity ; — that is, they may in no wise exert their magistratical power for that end. If this be what you mean, I suppose, no good Christian of any denomination whatever will refuse it. Some indeed may contend for more ; but none will strike out against thus much. But is this all that has been held and maintained by our covenanting and Presbyterian divines on this (of late) so much controverted point ? Is there no more intended by that celebrated question in divinity, on the head of the civil magistrate’s power *circa sacra* ? Or does not, what is reputed, the orthodox side of the question rather affirm, that they are to act as such ? or to exert their magistratical power and authority for the end and purpose mentioned ? And, agreeably hereto, do not your own standards evidently suppose, that they are to act a part concerning religion, proper and peculiar unto magistrates as such ; and what is competent for none others to act ? Whence, one cannot help suspecting, that by this abrupt hint, or distinction of yours, you mean (though somewhat slyly and artfully) to undermine the orthodox doctrine, yea the Synod’s received and sworn-to principles on this head : for if magistrates are not to act about religion, as such and in that precise capacity ; how is their sanction of temporal rewards and punishments to be obtained for enforcing a national uniformity, or corroborating church deeds and determinations ? — The truth is, you would “ seem evidently to be one “ of those who heartily hate this Presbyterian principle, yea, to “ whom it is — an abomination.” But, perhaps, I am mistaking or misrepresenting your meaning ; which I would be very sorry to do. Although “ I have some reasons for suspecting,” that either you are not of the Synod’s principles as to the civil magistrate’s power *circa sacra* ; or that, on this occasion, you have “ known some reason of prudence, fear, or shame,” for dissembling and colouring them over ; yet I am still at some loss to know your real sentiments this way, — until you be pleased to favour me with a fuller and clearer explication of them : and therefore, that I may be the better certified hereof, I beg you will

will answer the few following queries, which are suggested unto my mind, by sundry passages and hints in your letter.

Quest. I. Is it your opinion, that the Christian magistrate has no more power concerning church-matters, or the kingdom of Christ, and the peculiar concerns thereof, than a private believer, or not?

Quest. II. Is it your opinion, that worldly power, or the power of the magistrate as such, ought not at all to be employed for advancing the cause and kingdom of Christ in the world, or not?

Quest. III. Do you think, it is unlawful to enact laws with worldly penalties in favour of the Christian religion, or for promoting and enforcing the doctrines, laws, and institutions of Christ's kingdom, or not?

Quest. IV. Is it your opinion, that no argument can be drawn from the examples of magistrates under the Old Testament, for the Christian magistrate's exerting his magistratical power and authority for bringing about and supporting a national reformation or uniformity in religion, and suppressing all false worship? Or, do you think the kingly office of David and his successors in his throne and kingdom, was typical? and, consequently, the part they acted toward the then church and kingdom of God, not to be imitated by magistrates under the gospel; or not?

Quest. V. Do you think, the magistrate ought not to annex the riches and honours of the worldly kingdom unto the true religion; or give civil encouragement and temporal rewards to good Christians living in his dominions, more than any other good subjects, or not?

Quest. VI. Is it your opinion, that the magistrate ought to give liberty to Heretics, Sectarians, and Latitudinarians, to vent their tenets, and worship God according to the light of their own consciences; suppressing or punishing none for matters of mere religion, provided they behave themselves as good and peaceable subjects of the civil state; or not?

These queries are extremely plain and simple, and, as I take it, very pertinent to the matters in question between you and me. If, therefore, you would be pleased to give plain and direct answers to them; it is likely, I would easily perceive wherein we differ, and wherein we agree. If we happen to agree, it will be no small honour for me to be of the same mind with you. If we happen to differ, I shall lay myself open to conviction from you.

You say, "The Seceders can heartily join with this writer in his exclamation,—Far hence be all such methods of violence from the cause and kingdom of the Prince of Peace: and they are at as great a loss as he can be, to see any fitness in depriving men of their natural rights and privileges as free-born

“ born and good subjects of an earthly kingdom, &c. — either
 “ for reclaiming men from error, or for producing real reli-
 “ gion.” — How consistently they can do so with some parts of
 their scheme of principles, may in so far appear from what has
 been declared in some former letters. You have not certainly
 forgot, that all who take the solemn league expressly profess to
 “ have before their eyes, the advancement of the kingdom of
 “ our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” — even when they swear,
 “ with all faithfulness to bring unto condign punishment all
 “ malignants, and hinderers of the reformation in religion,
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 sult some of your brethren of no small reputation; although
 they may grant, that “ they are at a loss to see any fitness in
 “ such methods for producing real religion, or begetting the
 “ knowledge, belief, and love of the truth;” yet they will at
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 of Christ as visible in the world, but such only as are the institu-
 ted and appointed means of perfecting the saints, and edifying
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imagining so ; especially considering, that they have so warmly espoused the solemn-league uniformity,—and, agreeably thereto, in the most explicit manner, declared for the incapacitating of men for serving their king and country, in such places as they may be found qualified for, unless they swear the covenants ; which, it must be granted, are at least partly religious. And the truth is, had some Seceders civil pains even of a higher degree at their disposal,—I should not wish any of my fellow-men, or fellow-Christians, who cannot in all points come up to their standard, to be at their mercy. — The reason you assign for your above assertion is in these words,—“ For the Associate Synod, in their Solemn Warning, have expressly and purpose-ly defined the toleration which they mean as testifying against, —to be such a toleration as gives countenance and encouragement to errors and corruptions, with an hinderance of ecclesiastical discipline.” Perhaps, I may have occasion to touch at the clause of the judicial testimony on this point afterwards ; and therefore shall be the shorter in my remarks here. I shall not insist upon the altercation or reasoning, I have heard, your way of expressing yourself about toleration occasioned, in either the Synod or committee, when the Solemn Warning was under consideration. It will be more to the purpose to observe, that it is not easy to see how a mere state-toleration, can, with any measure of propriety, be said to “ give countenance and encouragement to errors and corruptions, or to be a hinderance to ecclesiastical discipline,” exercised and gone about in the above manner. For what more seems to be in it, than an indulgence to good and peaceable subjects of the civil state, who cannot in all points conform to the established religion of their country, to profess religion and worship God according to their own consciences,—with a sort of security from outward molestation and disturbance on account of their so doing ?—Whatever sort of toleration Seceders mean *not* to testify against ; thus much is certain, that they actually *do* testify against all the kinds and shapes of toleration, that were ever known in this country since the reformation ; such as, Cromwell’s, which indeed seems to have been like the dawning of British liberty as to matters of conscience,—King James VII.’s,—and Queen Anne’s, which last dissenters presently reap the benefit of. I shall only add, that though I may reckon it not altogether fair and honest ; yet I do not at all wonder, to find a man of your judgment and penetration stretching a point, to colour over this leading branch of the Secession-testimony unto the public : for, doubtless, it is a very great oddity in dissenters from the church as by law established, to display an open testimony against toleration ; which, as I said before, seems to be the only or principal security they

can

can pretend unto for their natural rights and religious liberties *. Should a toleration ever happen to take place in France, what would you and I think of the Protestants there, if they should take it in their heads to enter into a solemn oath and covenant to contend against the same? — I know indeed, that many of your way do not reckon themselves indebted to the toleration; but consider themselves as standing upon the legal securities given unto the covenanted uniformity in the period between 1638 and 1650;—as being the only true reforming and covenanting church of Scotland: But, alas! what security can these afford them, while “they are lying buried under the grave-stone of sundry “parliamentary acts and deeds, particularly the infamous act “rescissory †?” Your good sense, however, I am sure, will not permit you to avail yourself much of these securities.

* “Nevertheless, it is worthy to be observed, that the most violent “of these defenders of the truth” (viz. by carnal weapons), “the opposers of errors, the exclaimers against schism, do hardly ever let “loose this their zeal for God, with which they are so warmed and inflamed, unless where they have the civil magistrate on their side. “But, so soon as ever court-favour has given them the better end of “the staff, and they begin to feel themselves the stronger, then presently peace and charity are to be laid aside.—Where they have not “the power to carry on persecution, and to become masters, there they “desire to live upon fair terms, and preach up toleration.” *Locke on toleration, p. 42.*

† Here I am reminded of an anecdote which I lately heard of a Seceding clergyman. Though it be but a hearsay, I have all imaginable reason for believing, that it is very true;—especially as my informer was himself a hearer on that occasion. — The minister was lecturing in John, chap. xi.—concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Lazarus.—And there he found the death and burial of the covenanted reformation; the grave-stones of parliamentary acts and deeds said to be laid upon it by our civil government, for keeping it down; and the Seceders, like the two sisters of the then defunct, mourning about the grave, and crying mightily for its resurrection,—at least, the preacher warmly exhorted them so to do.—Some censorious sort of people would be apt to call this, stretching a point,—or forcing a plain, obvious passage of scripture into an allegorical sense, for serving party-purposes: But I would rather chuse to call it the product of a very fertile imagination: for ordinary sort of geniuses might think very long upon that part of sacred history, before they could find out such things in it. For aught I know, these thoughts never occurred unto any of our commentators upon it, not even the most ingenious of them.—But, as an evidence of the vastly-superior abilities, ingenuity, and invention of Seceding preachers;—allegorical interpretations of that sort, or such transitions from the literal to the allegorical sense, are quite familiar and easy unto many of them. And the people are generally very fond of such uncommon expositions or views of scripture-passages.

“ Agreeably to all this,” you add,—“ in an address to the
 “ Associate Synod, which I read before them ten years ago,
 “ and afterwards published, I had occasion to speak as follows ;”
viz. “ For my part, I look upon all the magisterial ways of ci-
 “ vil power and authority, as being none of God’s ordinances
 “ for reclaiming a backsliding generation from a course of pre-
 “ vailing errors and corruptions, about the matter of revealed
 “ religion.” And what I so declared has never, either then or
 “ since, met with a syllable of contradiction from any of them.”
 The occasion of this address has already been hinted at, namely,
 the motion of a late worthy and eminent person concerning a
 synodical application unto the higher powers for reviving the so-
 lemn-league uniformity throughout the kingdoms of Britain
 and Ireland; which, with the reasons thereof, you published
 along with your own address. This, from sundry considera-
 tions, you did not judge proper to fall in with, but rather
 vehemently to oppose; having had discerning enough to see,
 that it would expose the body you stand connected with, unto
 the ridicule of the intelligent part of mankind.—In this address,
 I acknowledge, you throw out some hints, which at first sight
 must make people think, that even then you were not found in
 the Synod’s principles, as to the part the civil magistrate is to
 act for bringing about and promoting a national uniformity in
 religion; — and had adopted some Sectarian tenets or other;
 or, at least, had a bias that way. But yet, at the same time,
 you are extremely cautious and wary in these matters; hints of
 this sort are both very short and abrupt.—The one you here
 instance in, viewed abstractly, and by itself, does not look very
 orthodox-like; but taking it in its connection with, and explain-
 ing it by, what goes before under the same head of argument, it
 will be found capable of a more favourable meaning: thus,—
 “ You look on all the magisterial ways of civil power and au-
 “ thority” immediately and at first instance, or without the
 previous determination of church-judicatories, “ as being none
 “ of God’s ordinances, &c.” Which is exactly agreeable to
 what has been already observed concerning the beautiful order
 contended for by Seceders, *viz.* the church going foremost, and
 the state following hard after with their civil sanction. Al-
 though, at the same time, I profess, I must look upon even
 this as a mere shift in the then present case: for, according to
 the declared principles of Seceders, where is the church-judi-
 catory in Britain to whom it can be competent to judge of those
 matters, but the Associate Synod?

If I do not greatly mistake your reasonings on that occasion,
 your opposition to the proposed application, does not at all go
 upon the unwarrantableness of such applications from church-
 judicatories;

judicatories ; but solely upon the present situation and circumstances of Seceders ;—as having, in their religious capacity, no direct and immediate intercourse with the powers. For aught that appears there, could Seceders be got brought into any proper connection with the powers ; you would have no manner of objection unto a repetition of the same scene which was acted in their standard-period, viz. from 1638 to 1650.—To this purpose it may be observed, that after you have gone through that worthy person's reasons, you add,—“ If our case, with respect to the civil powers, were any way like that of the prophets, with respect to the builders of the second temple,—all the present difficulty would be solved : that is, if we had any such providential intercourse with the civil powers, as the prophets had with the builders ; and if we had the civil powers to excite and encourage to a proceeding in reformation-work, as being *only dilatory* or *discouraged* about it.”—And then, you go on to shew, that “ the step now proposed seems to be, — *unwarrantable* :” which you chiefly argue from hence, that the Associate Synod are not “ brought into an immediate and particular intercourse with the powers ; whence, it cannot be pretended that they have any such providential warrants,” viz. as the prophets of old had.—*Impracticable* ;” which you illustrate thus ;—“ We cannot formally present any address or petition unto the King, without getting some great personage to introduce us. But though this were done, and a favourable audience got, yet the difficulty would not be over : for all that could be expected of the King, according to the nature of the business, is,—to recommend us by a message unto the houses of parliament, in our going to address them ; and we could have no access to them, but by a method of address which is inconsistent with our principles,—taking in the title of *lords spiritual*. But, though this could be dispensed with, yet there is no access to lay a petition before either house of parliament, without getting a member of the house to introduce it. When such is the case, I cannot help thinking it even ridiculous to suppose that these bars could be surmounted by us, in the present state of matters !—*Unseasonable* :—But what I properly mean here,” say you, “ as to the step proposed, is the appearance of its being unseasonable with respect to ourselves,—considering what is our present situation. We are a very small remnant, of no secular influence, objects of a general prejudice and contempt, who have no direct or immediate intercourse with the civil powers ; and who, in our religious capacity, have no intercourse with them at all,—no way known or acknowledged by them, in that capacity. And whatever we may

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“ think of ourselves” (indeed, I doubt not, but you think highly enough of yourselves), “ or whatever the generation ought to think of us,” (*highly*, to be sure !);—“ yet, in fact, we are unto them a hated and despised Sectary,” (a name which those of your way are very liberal in bestowing upon all who differ from them on the head of an enforced national uniformity in religion): “ so that, according to any rational view, an address and petition from us, such as is now moved for, would come to be considered in the same seditious and ridiculous light,—as if any of the Sectaries through Britain or Ireland were petitioning the government to espouse and establish their principles. But it seems evident, that our addressing and petitioning, under these disadvantages, — would be an opposing instead of promoting the Lord’s cause.” And so forth of the rest, which is all to much the same purpose *. Whence it appears, that the great lines of your address are nowise inconsistent with the Synod’s principles; and therefore a few abrupt hints might be the more easily overlooked. You, no doubt, knew some reason for being more cautious on this

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as holding, strenuously argued and contended for by Seceders. Pray, do not give me the lie here: for, though you should make a monopoly of the Lord's cause and testimony, you should certainly allow others some share of common veracity. Besides, if I appeared grossly ignorant of "the principles of Seceders,—
 "and *what they are*," I stood the more in need of information and instruction about them; and I gave you a fit opportunity of so informing and instructing me: But how have you done it? It may be owing to the dulness of my capacity; but, some how or other, I am left as much in the dark this way as ever.—And whereas you say, "that, before making his late attack upon the
 "Seceders, he should have been at more pains to know *what they are*;"—whether I was at any pains to know what they are, before making said attack, or not; I have been at more since: and the more pains I am at this way, I am still the more satisfied of the justness of the representation I have given of the Seceders, with regard to the "matters somewhat political."

You conclude, soothing and encouraging yourself and adherents thus:—"One thing is peculiar to them;—the many other religious denominations of people in this country, who have their
 "particular oppositions to one another, do all concur in having
 "those Seceders—for the *common butt* of their arrows. This is
 "far from being a situation in itself agreeable: but it hath one
 "peculiar advantage,—as being one of the evidences that the
 "Lord's CAUSE is among them, that the LORD himself
 "is with them." Thus, as I said before, if your prayer for
 "the bringing of the covenanted reformation into repute," or
 "removing all the infamy which it lies under in this generation," were answered; you would be deprived of "one peculiar advantage," one grand evidence, "that the LORD's
 "CAUSE is among you, that the LORD himself is with
 "you." But, if it were not presumption in me, I would entreat you, not to lay an undue or disproportionate stress upon this evidence; nor buoy up poor simple people too much with it: for, if you have no other to rest your cause or peculiar scheme upon, there is ground to think, that this of itself is not sufficient to bear you or them out in their confident boasting.—Sagacious and judicious as you and your brethren are, I presume, you will not pretend to infallibility, or that you are absolutely incapable of erring: whence, it is possible at least, that you may be mistaken in some things which fall under the designation of *received principles*. And therefore it can be nowise unsafe for you and the people, further to search the scriptures, whether all these things be so; lest, perhaps, some of the things held and maintained by you, particularly of the "matters somewhat political," should in reality be no part of the Lord's cause; but rather a
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cause of human device ; - especially, as our Lord has expressly declared, that his *kingdom is not of this world*,—and, of consequence, does not consist in *matters political*.

And further, I would remind you, that the advantage you seem to avail yourself so much of, and lay so much stress upon, “ as one of the evidences, that the Lord’s *cause* is among you” of the Secession, “ that the *Lord* himself is with you,” — is not peculiar to you, as you here insinuate ; but in common to you with some other denominations also, — in particular the church of Rome, which has of a very long time confidently monopolized the Lord’s cause, or the visible church-state, together with all the rights and privileges thereto belonging, — exclusive of all others whatsoever : For “ all the other religious denominations of people, — who have their particular oppositions to one another, concur in having” said church “ for the *common butt* of their arrows :” Therefore may the Pope and his clergy conclude, “ the *Lord’s cause* is among them, the *Lord* himself “ is with them.” I heartily wish, poor unwary people may be on their guard against such fair and fallacious speeches ; at least so far, as not to embark in the Secession-cause, upon so slender and precarious evidences. — *I am, &c.*

L E T T E R XIII.

S I R,

HAVING finished what animadversions I thought proper to make upon your letter in the Magazine ; I beg leave now to give you a more full and particular account of the received and sworn-to principles of Seceders, on the head of *the civil magistrate’s power circa sacra*. This account I shall take from the most unexceptionable authorities : and shall begin with the Scotch Confession of Faith, (which, it is readily acknowledged, contains a collection of precious scripture-truths, yea sundry excellent things concerning gospel-churches), art. 25. “ To kings, princes, and magistrates, does chiefly and most principally appertain the conservation and purgation of religion ; so that, not only are they appointed for civil policy, but also for the maintenance of the true religion.”

First book of Discipline, sect. 4. “ The kirk and faithful magistrate should compel all such as have gifts, to take the office of teaching upon them.” — Second book of Discipline, chap. i. “ The civil power should command the spiritual to exercise and do their office, according to the word of God. — The civil magistrate ought to assist, maintain, and fortify the jurisdiction

“ tion of the kirk.” And chap. 10. “ It pertaineth to the office of a Christian magistrate, to assist and fortify the godly proceedings of the kirk in all behalfs;—to see that the kirk be not invaded nor hurt by false teachers;—to assist and maintain the discipline of the kirk, and punish them civilly that will not obey the censures of the same.”

The Associate Synod must certainly be understood as holding these principles and sentiments, until they, in their synodical capacity, declare the contrary: for said Confession and books of Discipline are expressly, and without excepting any one point of doctrine therein contained, homologated or approved in the judicial testimony,—and also in their covenant itself; hence, that clause in the entry of the confession of sins prefixed to the bond,—“ We all and every one of us seriously considering,—that all ranks of persons within this land, did, by a national oath and covenant,—sundry times bind and oblige both themselves and their posterity, to continue in the profession, faith, and obedience of the true reformed religion, as the same is held forth, from the word of God, in our first Confession of faith, and books of Discipline.”

Moreover, these principles exactly agree with what is taught in the Westminster Confession on the same subject, *the whole doctrine* whereof, without limitation or exception, the Synod have solemnly received as the confession of their faith, and do bring their people under oath to continue therein unto their life's end.—Hence chap. 20. sect. 6. “ For the publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation; or to the power of godliness;—or such erroneous opinions and practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing and maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in his church;—persons may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and” (N. B.) “ by the power of the civil magistrate.” And chap. 23. sect. 3.—“ The civil magistrate hath authority, and it is his duty to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of the gospel be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline be prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed:—for the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.”

And here it may be observed, that the national covenants of these

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these lands (especially the solemn league) were plainly framed and set on foot upon, or in pursuance of those principles.—In the national covenant of Scotland, it is said, —“ And because we perceive that the quietness and stability of our religion and kirk, does depend upon the safety and good behaviour of the King’s Majesty, as upon a comfortable instrument of God’s mercy granted to this country, —for the maintaining of this kirk,—we protest and promise,—That we shall defend his person and authority in the defence of Christ’s evangel.” This seems to be referred unto in the beginning of the general bond, in which said covenant was again subscribed, *anno* 1590:—“ We undersubscribing, considering the strait link and conjunction that is between the true and Christian religion presently professed within this our realm, and our Sovereign Lord’s estate and standing, having both the self-same friends and common enemies, and subject to the like event of standing and decay.” —Which is repeated in the preamble of that bond, in which the national covenant was renewed in the year 1638, where —“ the religion and kirk of Christ, and the civil magistrate,” are said “ to stand and fall together.” Both these bonds are expressly mentioned in the narrative prefixed to said covenant, as it stands in the Associate Presbytery’s act for renewing the same, —which is read over every time the Secession-bond is sworn and subscribed *.

Seceders;

* It is readily granted, that great allowance is to be made for our ancestors on this head, considering their then circumstances; and also, that the outward peace and tranquillity of church members in the profession of the true religion, under God, in a great measure depends on the good behaviour of the civil magistrate in the exercise of his civil office, —protecting and defending his good subjects in the enjoyment of their natural rights and civil properties: Thus, keeping his subjects, not only from destroying, but even injuring one another in the least degree, upon account of any of their mutual differences in religious profession and worship; keeping the furious zeal of some, in religion so called, from breaking into the natural and civil rights of others who differ from them; —suppressing and discouraging all religious murders, religious oppressions, religious injuries, defamations, abuses, &c. But yet I cannot help thinking, that the above words, in their most plain and obvious meaning, favour too much of carnal confidence, or an undue stress upon the secular arm, and suppose or imply a closer link and conjunction between the religion and church of Christ, and the civil magistrate, than ever the all-wise Head of the church seems to have willed or appointed. What! the religion and church of Christ, and a particular earthly monarch, subject to the like event of standing and decay, and supposed to stand and fall together. How harsh and uncouth a sound has this in Christian ear. How melancholy would it

Seceders, when testifying against the present toleration, *Judicial Testimony*, p. 49. declare, "that thereby the government and discipline of this church were exceedingly weakened."—And Answers to Mr Nairn, p. 52.—"Thereby a very dangerous blow was given unto the government and discipline of this church." Which doubtless implies, that, in their judgment, the discipline of the church ought to be armed with the coercive power of the civil magistrate. (which indeed is expressly affirmed in the forecited clauses of the second book of Discipline); and that the disarming it thereof, exceedingly weakens it, gives it a very dangerous blow. See also to the purpose presently in hand,

case be, if it really were so!—I shall here take occasion to observe, that, throughout the Secession-testimony, there seems to be a very peculiar stress laid upon the immediate or direct countenance and concurrence of the civil powers, and their ratification or establishment of the true religion, the cause and kingdom of Christ. Which, it is confessed, I do not well understand. Sure, gospel-Zion's bulwarks and establishments are not the edicts or statutes of emperors, kings, and parliaments: no; the HIGHEST himself doth establish her. These may be the bulwarks and settlements of a kingdom of this world, but not at all of a kingdom, which is expressly declared not to be of this world. Such a bustle in some places of the world called Christian has been made about human ratifications and establishments of the true religion, or what pretended to be so, as, in my view, is enough to tempt the enemies of Christianity to think or suspect, that it could not keep its ground in the world, if it were not supported and borne up by such carnal or worldly props. But, thanks be unto God, the case is quite otherwise: For the church and kingdom of Christ is built upon a rock; so that the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against it, Matth. xvi. 18. The Son of God, who stands at the head of the Christian cause, is abundantly able to plead and maintain it, although none of the powers of this world should take it by the hand, or exert their worldly power and policy for its support and maintenance. Doubtless, he is by far too strong for Satan the grand head of the apostasy, and for all his confederates and emissaries, even all the powers of the enemy. *Let the children of Zion therefore be joyful in their King*, Psal. cxlix. 2. *For their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land; and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon*, Jer. l. 34. Compare H. xxxiii. 21. 22. *But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; he will save us. Zech. ii. 5. For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her. And chap. ix. 8. I will encamp about mine house, because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.*

p. 47. of the Answers, where they quote, and declare their heartiest approbation of, what they call, "the deed of civil constitution set upon a reformed footing, by act 8. parl. 1. Ja. VI.;" whereof I have given some account in a former letter.—The late famous Mr William Wilton (who, being one of the first constituent members of the Associate Presbytery, must be allowed thoroughly to have understood their principles on this head) taught, that "the church may not only advise the magistrate, but directly apply to him for the civil sanction unto such acts and constitutions of her judicatories, as are founded upon the word of God; and that it is his duty to give the civil sanction unto such ecclesiastical acts and constitutions," *Defence*, p. 302. And, agreeably hereto, as was hinted on a former occasion, he asserts the warrantableness of imposing oaths and covenants respecting religion upon the subjects, under civil pains and temporal evils, p. 300. — Exactly correspondent unto all the above, is the declaration of the principles of Seceders on this head, made by the late Mr Campbell, in his forementioned book.—I shall only add one authority more at the time, which, considering the importance of the author, must be of no small weight:—"The magistrate is to strengthen the church's hands, by giving the civil sanction (so far as proper) to her determinations," *Observations*, &c. by Mr William Moncrieff, p. 30. How far the Professor might reckon this proper, or how high he thinks the magistrate's sanction should run, he has not seen meet expressly to declare; "but I have some reasons for suspecting, that" he would admit of its going no small length.

The few following things seem evidently to be contained in, or fairly deducible from, all the above passages taken together; which I shall distinctly mention; and, at the same time, propose what objections I have unto them.

1. To the civil magistrate does chiefly and most principally appertain the conservation and purgation of religion; that is, the faith once delivered to the saints, and the appointed worship and discipline to be observed in the churches of Christ.

But how can this be? For was not the main end of the appointment of the civil magistrate and his office (which, as to its essentials, is the same in all countries) the civil interest and temporal welfare of men and women associated together in civil communities;—to guard against such outward actions as are prejudicial to human society, and to encourage the contrary? Are not the things of this life the proper object of his office-power and concern? If this be not granted, how can the propriety of his designation, a *civil magistrate*, be accounted for? If he be chiefly and principally appointed for the preservation and reformation of Christian religion, that religion must be the main object

of his office power and concern, or of his attention and cognisance as a magistrate; and then, I think, he might as well be called by any name in the world as by that of a *civil magistrate*. The secular magistrate's office and power, if I mistake not, belongs, yea is appropriated unto the civil community as such; and if so, the peculiar affairs and interests of the civil community as such, must needs be the object thereof: But religion, as above described, does not appertain unto the peculiar affairs of the civil community or worldly kingdom. The doctrines, laws, and institutions of Christ, seem not to be a trust committed unto the body politic, with its rulers and magistrates, as such; but rather a trust committed unto the church, with its overseers, as such. Whence, I confess, I have no great notion of matters of revealed religion entering into the deliberations of kings councils as such; nor of their being debated and concluded in parliaments; such deliberations, debates, or conclusions, would seem much rather to belong unto churches of the living God. Agreeably to this, the church is said to be *the ground and pillar of the truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15: and church-officers, not civil magistrates, are said to be *set for the defence of the gospel*; at least, so speaks Paul of himself in particular, Phil. i. 17. — If the person sustaining the office of magistracy be a Christian or church-member, doubtless he ought to concern himself with the truths and institutions of Christ, and to exert himself for their preservation or reformation; both by his own personal example, and all other ways lawful and competent for a Christian man or church-member. But that is widely different from the matter objected unto.

2. The civil magistrate ought to compel gifted persons to take the office of pastors and teachers in the church, upon them. As to which, I shall only say, that it is not in my power to reconcile this with the apostle's charge, 1 Pet. v. 2. *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly.* — From this passage, however, of the first book of Discipline, I have sometimes thought, that our reformers from Popery do not seem to have stood upon university-education as necessary to the *being* of Christian bishops, pastors, or teachers; and that, chiefly for these two reasons: (1.) Because they do not say students who have waited such a number of years upon the colleges; but gifted persons: (2.) Because university-men rarely need the compulsion of the magistrate to take the office upon them; especially, if there be a tolerable maintenance annexed to it: — at least, I scarce remember to have heard of any such thing.

3. The civil magistrate hath a power of superintending, directing, and commanding church officers and assemblies, in their ecclesiastical

ecclesiastical capacity, and in the exercise of their spiritual or ecclesiastical functions. Thus, the civil magistrate as such is made judge of the matters of revealed religion; and church-officers, even in the exercise of their church-offices, subjected unto his cognisance and jurisdiction. Nay, in my view, this gives the magistrate a sort of supremacy in all causes, not only civil, but ecclesiastical also: otherwise how could he provide, that whatever is transacted in the meetings of church-officers, be according to the word of God, and command them, either conjunctly or severally, to exercise their office according to that word? that is, according to what in his judgment is agreeable thereto, whether in reality it be so, or not.—But how will this comport with the freedom of the church and kingdom of Christ, and its independency upon the civil state? For illustration's sake: Should any foreign power, for instance, that of France, superintend the British courts in their proceedings, and command his Britannic Majesty's ministers, officers, or judges, to exercise their office, even though it should happen to be according to the statute-laws of the land; would not that be reckoned inconsistent with the freedom and independency of the British nation? The application is easy. If the civil magistrate be a Christian and church-member, doubtless, he may say to Christian pastors, *Take heed to the ministry which ye have received in the Lord, that ye fulfil it*, Col. iv. 17. But to exert his royal authority or magistratical power this way, is what I cannot so well understand.

In this connection, it may not be improper to observe, that the Synod which compiled the Westminster Confession, (the constituent members whereof seem indeed, for the most part, to have been very eminent men), was not only convened, but also superintended and directed in their proceedings, by the English parliament, most of whom, it is plain, were men of Erastian principles. And accordingly they would never grant the independency of the church-power upon the civil power: so far from it, that even after they had given their sanction to the Presbyterian government, they established an appeal from the general assembly, the top of the ecclesiastical subordination, unto the high court of parliament, as the last resort in church-affairs.—And indeed, after all, upon the principle of its being the magistrate's duty to give his sanction unto whatever the clergy enact; it would seem highly reasonable, that such a superintendency or supremacy should be allowed him.—If this should appear any wise contradictory unto, or inconsistent with the forementioned “beautiful order,” largely insisted upon by Mr Campbell and others; I am not to account for that: it is enough for me, that this principle seems evidently to be contained or implied in the above-cited passages of the books of Discipline and
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the Westminster Confession ; which hitherto have been acknowledged as the standards of Seceders.

4. The discipline and censures of the church ought to be armed with the coercive and punitive power of the civil magistrate : or, he ought to ratify and enforce church deeds and determinations with the sanctions of temporal rewards and punishments ; and the church, that is, church-courts, may warrantably apply to him so to do. But I am not at all clear as to this : For,

(1.) This seems to imply in it a manifest perversion of the true nature, ends, and uses of the Christian discipline. The appointed discipline of gospel-churches, is purely spiritual : it is so in respect of its object, the consciences of men ;—and also, in respect of its end and use, which is the tendency of their souls unto God,—their spiritual obedience in Christ, and eternal salvation. The declared end of excommunication itself, which is the highest act of church-discipline, is *the destruction*, not of mens lives and fortunes, but *of the flesh*, that is, the corrupt and unrenewed part ; *that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*, 1 Cor. v. 5. To me it appears plain and undeniable, that excommunication, or exclusion from the visible church, can only deprive men and women of those rights and privileges, whereunto they are entitled by church-membership. Now, the church of Christ being a spiritual society, a kingdom not of this world ; it is plain, that the peculiar benefits and advantages thereof are wholly of the spiritual kind ; — however that wisdom which is carnal and sensual, may have devised other sort of advantages, and contended that the riches and honours of the worldly kingdom should attend upon, or be annexed unto it. Whence, it necessarily follows, that excommunication can of right only deprive persons of spiritual privileges and advantages ; and not worldly ones,—such as, a place and post in the worldly kingdom, sums of money, houses and lands, &c. *

(2.) This seems, in so far, to imply an homologation or acknowledgment of another, a foreign kingly power, to be exercised in or toward the church and kingdom of Christ, beside that of Christ, the sole King of that kingdom ; and, of conse-

* “ Excommunication neither does nor can deprive the excommunicated person of any of those civil goods that he formerly possessed. — The whole force of excommunication consists only in this, that the resolution of the society, in that respect, being declared, the union that was between the body and some member comes thereby to be dissolved ; and that relation ceasing, the participation of some certain things, which the society communicated to its members, and unto which no man has any civil right, comes also to cease.” *Locke on toleration*, p. 40.

quence, it amounts unto a partial subjecting of church-members, in their faith, worship, and obedience, unto that other power. For to annex sanctions to laws is as much an act of regal or kingly power and authority, as to make the laws themselves: and therefore, even although those deeds and determinations of church-officers, unto which the civil magistrate gives his sanction, should be no new doctrines or laws, but a just declaration and vindication of the doctrines and laws of Christ contained in the holy scriptures; yet his adding new sanctions even to the doctrines and laws of Christ, sanctions not annexed unto them by Christ himself, appears to be a partial invasion of, and encroachment upon the kingly power and royal prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here I am reminded of the following sentiments of a learned writer, who, whether he was a Latitudinarian or not, cannot, I suppose, be charged with being a Sectarian; because he was a national churchman, yea, a prelate of the national church of England:—"If any man upon earth have a right to add to the sanctions of Christ's laws; that is, to increase the number, or alter the nature of the rewards and punishments of his subjects, in matters of conscience or salvation; they are so far kings in his stead, and reign in their own kingdoms, and not in his.—To annex sanctions to laws, is as much an act of regal power as to make the laws themselves. To add new sanctions, is the same thing. Whoever annexes, or adds sanctions, is so far king; because he does an act of regal power. If the King of France has a right to add sanctions to any of the laws of England, for the use of the subjects of England; he is so far King of England; and so far England is his kingdom; because he so far governs the subjects of England.—If any men upon earth have this right, then they are of right so far kings in Christ's stead; because he has no part in adding those sanctions, which they add of themselves: and there they reign, in adding those sanctions, so far, in their own kingdom; because it is their own kingdom, as far as they act a regal part in it, as much as the subjects of England would be so far subjects to the King of France, if they were bound by the sanctions which he should add to the laws of England, over and above what the legislative authority of England had annexed to them."

Hoadly's Sermon before the King, March 31. 1717; and Answer to the representation of the lower house of convocation.

(3.) I conceive this derogates greatly from the honour and glorious majesty of the church's high and mighty King; as somehow implying or insinuating, that he were not possessed of a sufficiency of power and might for making his laws and institutions effectual unto their proper ends and uses, without the aid

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and assistance of the powers of this world ; — otherwise, why should his ministers be so solicitous about their sanctions unto his laws ? If the British judges should apply unto a foreign power, for its sanction unto their decisions ; would not that derogate greatly from the honour and majesty of the British Monarch, as implying, that he had not a sufficiency of power for reducing his own laws to practice, or putting them in execution, among his own subjects ? The instance, I suppose, is quite pertinent. — The above-mentioned clause of the judicial testimony, at first sight, makes this disagreeable insinuation, while it asserts, that by the toleration 1712 the government and discipline of this church were exceedingly weakened. But how could that be ? If the government and discipline of this church really be that appointed by Christ, how could it be exceedingly weakened, or any wise rendered ineffectual for the reaching of its proper spiritual ends, by a mere state-toleration, or the divesting it of a coercive and punitive power ? For are not all Christ's laws and institutions sufficiently corroborated and enforced by his own sole power and authority ? For my part, I confess, the mode of expression so much used and insisted upon by some, namely, the civil magistrate's corroborating the laws of Christ, has a disagreeable sound to me. — Here I shall give place unto the following passage from another learned writer : the author, indeed, I believe, has the misfortune of being habited and reputed a Sectarian ; but yet he said and wrote a great many very just things in his day : — “ The Lord Christ hath ordained no power nor order in his church, no officer or duty, — that should stand in need of civil authority, sanction, or force, to preserve it, or make it effectual to its proper ends. It is sufficient to discharge any thing of being an appointment of Christ in his church, if it be not sufficient unto its own proper end, without the help of the civil magistrate. That church-state which is either constitute by human authority, or cannot subsist without it, is not from him : that ordinance, which is in its own nature divine, or is pretended so to be, — so far as it is not effectual unto its end without the aid of human authority is not of him, — he needs it not ; he will not borrow the assistance of human authority, to rule in and over the consciences of men, with respect to their living unto God, and coming unto the enjoyment of him.” *Dr Owen's Inquiry, &c.*

(4.) This is plainly inconsistent with the rights of conscience, and of private judgment. It is certainly the privilege, and the bounden duty of the whole Christian people, to search the scriptures, and by that rule to judge of religion for themselves ; and are not therefore obliged to submit to the dictates and decisions

cisions of any order of men whatever, in points of conscience or matters of religion, without free examination. They are to try the doctrines, commandments, and determinations of men, by the unerring rule of God's word, the doctrine of the prophets and apostles committed to writing; for we are commanded to *prove all things, and hold fast that which is good*, 1 Thess. v. 21. We must *not believe every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they be of God*, 1 John iv. 1. To the same purpose, the Bereans are commended as noble, for trying the doctrines even of the apostles themselves, whether they did agree with that part of the canon of scripture then extant, Acts xvii. 11. And, 1 Cor. x. 15. Paul calls upon the Christians to *judge what he said*. See also Is. viii. 20. John v. 39. 2 Tim. iii. 15. 16. 17. 2 Pet. i. 19. 20. 21. 1 John iv. 6. If, upon diligent and impartial trial this way, the doctrines and determinations of church-officers, either conjunctly or individually, appear to be agreeable unto, or contained in the scriptures of truth; they are readily to be received and submitted unto; not indeed upon their own authority, but solely the authority of God speaking in the scriptures;—although, at the same time, these are to be esteemed and honoured for their work's sake; not as having dominion over the people's faith and conscience, but as *helpers of their joy*. But if, after such trial or judging, it appear otherwise, we are not certainly to suffer our consciences to be brought into bondage unto the doctrines, commandments, and authority of men; but we are to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*. Nor does this encourage men to transgress, or go beyond any line of subordination appointed in the word of God; but only constitutes them judges of their own actions, which they are obliged to conform, not to the decrees of men, but to the word of God;—agreeably to the practice of the apostles, who, when discharged, by the Jewish council, to speak any more in the name of Jesus, found themselves bound boldly to answer, *Whether it be right to obey God or men, judge ye*.—The contrary or opposite of this, is the very argument and language of the advocates for the see of Rome: while they plead, that people must believe as the church believes; or for the Pope's visible headship and irrefragable jurisdiction over the church, to which all ought to submit, without contradiction or gainsaying;—the very thing which set up the man of sin, to sit as God in the temple of God, to the enslaving both of the word of God, and the consciences of men; by the requiring of them subjection and blind obedience to his dictates.—Some Protestant writers, of no small reputation, have observed, that the very essence of Antichristianism lies in an ambitious imposing and persecuting spirit:

and if so, no small share of it would seem at times to have obtained, even among some called Protestant.

But how said rights of conscience and private judgment can possibly be maintained and preserved, upon the principle presently under consideration, is not easy to see. If the whole people in a nation are to be forced by civil penalties to receive and submit unto the dictates and determinations of those clergy, who happen to have the countenance of the civil powers, assembled together in their judicative capacity;—pray, what room is left for the pre-exercise of private judgment, or people's judging in religion for themselves according to their own judgment?

(5.) This would seem to lay a foundation for introducing the greatest tyranny and oppression, over both the bodies and consciences of men. What dreadful havock and devastation has, upon this principle, been effected in sundry places of the world called Christian? We would need to be well assured of the absolute infallibility of that set of clergy whose determinations were to be thus enforced, enforced with all manner of temporal evils and corporal punishments?—"The way of requiring the sanction of civil authority unto ecclesiastical orders and determinations, began with the use of general councils in the days of Constantine: and when once it was so far engaged in, and approved of, that whatever was determined in the synods, either as to doctrine, or the rule of the church, should be confirmed by the imperial authority, with penalties on all that should gain-say such determinations;—it is deplorable to think what mutual havock was made among Christians, upon the various sentiments of synods and emperors." *Dr Owen's Inquiry, &c.*

5. Agreeably hereto, and necessarily consequential thereupon, the civil magistrate ought to punish, forcibly suppress, and root out of his dominions, all heretics, enemies of the true worship of God, disturbers of the peace of the church, &c. that is, all such as the magistrate, or the clergy he countenances, shall adjudge so to be.

But, for my part, I do not see how religious opinions and sentiments come to fall under the civil magistrate's cognisance, any otherwise than in so far as they have a tendency to hurt human society, disturb the public peace, or encroach upon private property. Heresy, superstition, and schism, are to be rooted out, not by oppression, but by scripture-argument; not by the sword of steel, but by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.—Other sort of methods, such as, parliamentary power and civil pains,—fines, imprisonment, the gallows, &c. can never open mens understandings, nor reclaim them from error. Those therefore who err concerning the faith, provided they do not injure the civil state, I would be for letting alone, as long as the Sovereign Lord of life and death sees meet to spare them; if

if peradventure God will yet give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. If the holy, just, and righteous God suffers them to live in his world; why should we grudge them the benefit of his long-suffering, or pretend to be more holy and severe than he? And indeed, as one observes, that church which burns, or otherwise destroys one heretic, is in a fair way to make an hundred hypocrites in his room. — It will not certainly be pled, that the church is to fight heretics, and other disturbers of her repose, with that sort of weapons: for, in that noted inventory of the whole armour of God, Eph. vi. 11.—18. there is not the smallest hint to this purpose. Nay, that same apostle, in another place, expressly declares, that *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but, nevertheless, mighty through God*, for the reaching of their proper ends, 2 Cor. x. 4. 5. The armour with which the church of Christ is to fight her enemies, is just *the sword of the Spirit*; and the appointed discipline, which, as was observed before, is wholly of the spiritual kind;—wielded or managed with all humility, meekness, and long-suffering; and also accompanied with prayers and tears. — And as has, upon the matter, been declared in some former letters, just as little warrant do I see for calling in the secular arm, to fight heretics, &c. with material weapons of any sort; much less weapons of slaughter. I can find nothing among the laws and institutions of Zion's King, to this purpose; but, I think, much to the very reverse.

It is true, this is the method which Antichrist hath now of a long time used for suppressing, and rooting out of the world, those whom the Pope and his clergy pronounced heretics, and disturbers of the peace of the church: for when it was found, that ecclesiastical censures were not sufficient for keeping men in blind subjection to the Pope; a decree was obtained in the fourth council of Lateran, in the year 1215, that all heretics should be delivered over to the civil magistrate to be burnt. This proved the main engine of all that Antichristian tyranny and oppression of the consciences of men, which since has been attended, or has flowed with a sea of Christian blood. And such Protestants as have been zealous this way, have just retained or taken up the point as they found it in the Antichristian state; transferring it over unto, and reducing it to practice in their own churches, when once they got the civil powers on their side. So that, although several of the reformed have held this principle; yet with no manner of propriety can it be said to be a reformation-principle, or any part of the reformed religion truly so called. And indeed, considering the horrible scenes which have accompanied and followed upon the application and use hereof, for rooting out the northern heresy, as they of the church of Rome call the reformed religion; I cannot but wonder, that ever any
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Protestants should have patronised it, or any thing that smells rank of it.

As to the popular objection, that this would be opening a door for all manner of errors, heresies, and confusions;—I shall only observe, that we are not to exalt our wisdom above the wisdom of the all-wise Head of the church, in attempting to provide remedies for evils, where he himself has not provided any. The church is to do her duty according to the will and appointment of Christ; using all scripture-methods in the spirit of meekness for reclaiming heretics, and other such like;—and, in case of failure that way, cutting them off from her communion by excommunication: and, after she hath so acted her part, I see no more that can be done with them, but leave them to the righteous judgment and sovereign disposal of God the Judge of all. If persons of that stamp will not hear the church, that is, the voice of Christ in his word held forth in, and applied by the church; then are they to be unto her as Heathen men. But, sure, we have no right in the least to injure Heathen men, in their persons or properties, merely on account of their being so *. And moreover, notwithstanding all the enmity and opposition that is in the world against the truths and institutions of Christ, we need not be afraid to venture them upon their own legs or bottom; for great is the truth, and it shall prevail †. Why? Because greater and stronger far is the spirit of Christ and of the truth, than the spirit of error and of Antichrist, 1 John iv. 4. —If the punishment and forcible suppression of heretics, &c. were so necessary for the preservation of the cause and kingdom of Christ in the world, as some have contended; pray, what

* “ But it may be asked, by what means then shall ecclesiastical laws
“ be established, if they must be thus destitute of all compulsive
“ power? I answer, they must be established by means suitable to the
“ nature of such things, whereof the external profession and observa-
“ tion, if not proceeding from a thorough conviction and approbation
“ of the mind, is altogether useless and unprofitable. The arms by
“ which the members of this society are to be kept within their duty,
“ are exhortations, admonitions, and advices. If by these means
“ the offenders will not be reclaimed, and the erroneous convinced,
“ there remains nothing farther to be done, but that such stubborn and
“ obstinate persons, who give no ground to hope for their reformation,
“ should be cast out and separated from the society. This is the last
“ and utmost force of ecclesiastical authority: no other punishment can
“ thereby be inflicted, than that the relation ceasing between the body
“ and the member which is cut off, the person so condemned ceases to
“ be a part of that church.” *Locke on toleration, p. 40.*

† “ Truth certainly would do well enough, if she were once left to
“ shift for herself.” *Locke on toleration, p. 55.*

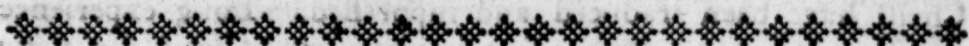
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would have come of it for the first three centuries, when, instead of being supported and defended by penal laws and statutes, the edge and force of these were every where turned against it?

Once more, under a pretence of punishing or suppressing heretics and disturbers of the peace of the church, it has frequently fallen out, that the faithful witnesses and servants of Jesus Christ have been traduced and suppressed. Long experience now puts it beyond doubt, that it is no great strait for some churchmen to sound an alarm of heresy against a person or persons, when there is a purpose to serve thereby; likeas Acrius, as far back as the fourth century, was stigmatized and branded by some leading churchmen with the odious epithet of an heretic, for maintaining the equality or identity of bishops and presbyters, and the unlawfulness of prayers for the dead. How hard then would the case be, if all were punished and suppressed by the secular arm, whom the leading churchmen in a nation might think proper to call heretics and disturbers of the peace of the church! The melancholiness of the case may be gathered from what actually took place under the reign of Antichrist, when this was so much practised; especially after the above-mentioned fourth council of Lateran, when the kings of the earth wantonly gave their power unto the beast, for that purpose. Then the faithful witnesses and confessors of our blessed Lord, were first pronounced heretics, or disturbers of the peace of the church; and then forthwith delivered over unto the secular power to be burnt, or otherwise destroyed, under that notion and consideration. Instances of this kind are innumerable: for that cruel, persecuting church came to be drunk and quite intoxicated with the blood of the saints. I shall only instance in one, namely, the famous John Huss, who was condemned as an heretic by the church, and then as such burnt to death by the civil power; beside other grounds (I think, I have somewhere read) for this, that he maintained the unwarrantableness of delivering over heretics to the secular arm, to be put to death. Which very thing, or what is near akin thereto, has, in later times, been judged heresy by those who have had the lead in Protestant churches of different denominations.—Thus, instead of suppressing errors and heresies truly so called, by this means there comes to be a grievous suppression of much precious truth and scripture-light.

Upon the whole; you must be very sensible, that you have openly contradicted and renounced the Synod's received principles, in these points. Whence, one would think, that if you meant to act consistently, you would have an overture in readiness against the next meeting of Synod, for their entering upon a re-consideration of these their principles, in order to a public renunciation of them: in which case, it would also be proper

proper for you to have in your pocket a draught for the new-modelling of the judicial testimony, act for renewing the covenants, &c. I only suggest these things;—leaving you at full liberty to act, as you, in your superior wisdom, may see cause. —Without any more at present, I am, &c.



L E T T E R XIV.

S I R,

I Am afraid, lest by this time my correspondence with you will be reckoned officious and troublesome, rather than friendly and desirable: but I beg leave to address you still, and that on a subject of the utmost importance to the church of Christ; mistakes about which are the true source of all the wrong methods of propagating its interest in the world.

Lately I happened to be on a journey; and, riding most of the way alone, my thoughts turned upon a variety of subjects. Among other things that crouded into my mind, the matters, particularly “the matters somewhat political,” which gave rise to my correspondence with you, held a principal place. From one thing to another, I was led to think a little of the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom under the gospel, and its distinction from the kingdoms of this world, together with the warping, blending, and confounding of the one and the other, which seems to run through the Secession-scheme *. While thus employed, it is natural enough to suppose, that the account which the King of saints himself gave of his own kingdom, — the nature of it, together with the way and means of its erection, and oncarrying in the world, when impeached on that head before the Roman governor,—would fall

* The late Mr Ebenezer Erskine, in a letter to a certain gentleman, who afterwards saw meet to publish it, expresses himself thus:—“I have several times thought the civil constitution was too much blended with the affairs of Christ’s kingdom, which is not of this world, in these public engagements [the covenants]; as also, that the way of forcing people to subscribe, was not the way to make profelytes unto Christ, the weapons of whose kingdom are not carnal, but spiritual, suited unto the soul and spirit, where his kingdom is principally established.” The same renowned person has some very just observations relative to the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom, both in his sermon preached at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, Oct. 1732; and in a representation given in by him and Mr Fisher to the commission, Aug. 1733. — How he reconciled some parts of his after conduct with these sentiments, is not my business to inquire.

under my consideration. This is recorded, John xviii. 36. 37. *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest, that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.* Of this testimony which our Lord, on that occasion, bore unto the truth, the apostle Paul makes honourable mention in 1 Tim. vi. 13.—*Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.* If this confession were more attended unto, and better understood, I apprehend, it would be an effectual antidote against sundry carnal and mistaken notions about the Messiah's kingdom, which not a few in our times seem to have imbibed. It was the first clause of ver. 36. that my thoughts fixed most upon:—*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world* *.—From which words, these three things occurred to my mind, namely, that the church is of the nature of a kingdom;—that this kingdom, that is, the church considered under the notion of a kingdom, is the kingdom of Christ, exclusive of all others whatever;—and that this kingdom of Christ, is a kingdom not of this world. Permit me, briefly to explain unto you my views of these matters: and wherein I am mistaken, I hope, you will, in a friendly manner, endeavour to rectify my mistakes, or wrong notions and conceptions.

I. The church is of the nature of a kingdom. As such, it is here described by our Lord himself, who is best acquainted with the true and genuine nature of it. That it is the church which our Lord in this place intends by his kingdom, to me appears so evident, that I do not see how it can be refused. The image of a kingdom is most fitly applied unto the church of Christ, whether it be considered in its visible, or its invisible frame and capacity: and indeed, that image, figure, and representation, serves much to lead us unto the true nature of the church, with its relation and subjection unto Jesus Christ.—As a kingdom,—its members are dispersed far and near, and yet gloriously united, or joined together, under one head:—it has a most glorious and excellent King, Lawgiver, and Judge; it is ruled by absolute monarchy, and yet enjoys perfect liberty and freedom:—here there are standing laws and regulations, which serve as the instrument of government, or the rule of the subjects conduct and obedience; warning them how they should

* See reflections on the last clause of the verse in the *Account of my difference with the Antiburgher-Seceders*, &c. p. 52.

frame their lives ;—and so forth of the like things ; which I will have occasion to mention more fully afterwards.

II. This kingdom, that is, the church considered under the notion of a kingdom, is the kingdom of Christ, exclusive of all others whatever. As such, our Lord here confesses and avows it ; *My kingdom*, says he. Whereby he plainly excludes all others from any manner of share therein, either as adjutants or substitutes. The whole government is upon his shoulders, *Is. ix. 6.* He is sole King and absolute Monarch in his own kingdom. Most gloriously and excellently does he fill the throne, and sway the sceptre himself ; so that he stands not in need of any others to take part with, or assist him in the rule and government. And therefore,

This kingdom being Christ's own kingdom ; it follows, that he himself must needs be sole King, Lawgiver, and Judge therein, *Is. xxxiii. 22.*—He, exclusive of all others, gives law unto the church, in all points belonging to conscience and eternal salvation ; or to religion and the worship of God,—their living unto God here, and coming unto the enjoyment of him hereafter. His authority and laws alone can bind the consciences of his subjects in these points. And indeed therein he hath left them altogether free from the authority, doctrines, and commandments of men, of whatever name, rank, or order they be : although, at the same time, they are still to be subject and obedient to the laws of the worldly kingdom wherein they live, in the matters belonging to this life ; and that, *not only for wrath, but for conscience sake.*—As Lawgiver of the church, he has furnished her with a system of the most excellent laws, which reach to the inward, as well as to the outward man ; and annexed most fit and proper sanctions or motives for promoting obedience to these laws, among his subjects : he hath left nothing to do this way (that is, either in a way of imposing new laws upon his church and people as such, or adding new sanctions unto the laws already given out by him) unto the wisdom of men, whether churchmen or statesmen. These laws of his are left on record in the sacred oracles, that they may be read, perused, and judged of by all his subjects for themselves : unto which, therefore, they are to have an immediate recourse and close regard ; that so their faith and obedience may not stand in, or be caused by the wisdom and authority of men, — but the power of God.

As King, he rules and governs his church and people by, or according to, the unparalleled laws, which he, as Lawgiver, has enacted and given forth ; the which, that the more cordial obedience may be effectually secured unto them, he even writes in the hearts of his subjects.—In the administration of his kingdom,

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dom, he not only, by an exceeding greatness of power, makes his people willing at first ; but, by the same power, still continues to work in them, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Whence, they come to obey, from the very heart, that form of doctrine delivered unto them, and into which they are moulded or cast : for thus they find his commandments not to be grievous ;—his yoke to be easy, and his burden light ;—yea, his ways to be ways of pleasantness, and all his paths peace.

In the foresaid matters, he is also sole Judge in the church ; at least, Judge in such a sense as none others are, or can pretend to be ;—judging of the genuineness and sincerity of the faith and obedience of his subjects : he judges, not only of their outward actions, and external conformity to his laws, which is all the length man's judgment can go ; but also of the inward principles from which these outward actions do proceed, the motives by which they are influenced, and the ends unto which they tend : and he renders unto every one, without respect of persons, according to his work. For his eyes are as a flame of fire ; glancing, and piercing into the inmost recesses of the heart and soul : so that however persons may deceive themselves, or impose upon others, they cannot deceive him with whom we have to do. What is said of the word of God, Heb. iv. 12. 13. most exactly holds of the personal Word made flesh, the church's all-seeing Judge :—*He is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight ; but all things are open and naked unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

From all which, I suppose, it will natively follow, that the members of Christ's church as such, or in that capacity, are the disciples, servants, and subjects of Christ alone ; and, of consequence, that it is the highest presumption for any sort of men to claim a dominion over their faith, a lordship over God's heritage ; see 2 Cor. i. 24. 1 Pet. v. 3. For thus, there is no dominion, lordship, or mastership, in the church and kingdom of Christ ; no authority, that can bind the consciences of his subjects in matters belonging to faith and the worship of God,—but that of Christ alone, the one only King, Judge, Lawgiver, and Master of Christians. Compare Matth. xxiii. 8. 10. *But be not ye called Rabbi : for one is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren. Neither be ye called masters : for one is your Master, even Christ. And 2 Cor. iv. 5. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.* The meaning and construction of which words, I take to

be thus : — We apostles preach not, or proclaim not ourselves, your masters ; but we preach and proclaim Christ Jesus, your Lord and Master ; and ourselves only your servants for Jesus' sake. And the truth is, the more close and immediate our regard and subjection unto Jesus Christ, as Lord and Lawgiver, be ; the more certainly do we evidence our being the true and genuine subjects of his kingdom, and not the servants of men.

III. This kingdom of Christ is a kingdom not of this world. Although the church of Christ be of the nature of a kingdom in general, and partly in the world ; yet, in its special nature and kind, it is widely different from the kingdoms and empires of this world. It is so in a great variety of respects * ; a few of which only I shall but just hint at this time. — In respect of its basis and foundation ; being founded not in nature, as are the kingdoms of this world, but in grace. — The end of its creation ; which is not men and womens temporal advantage, or worldly wealth and prosperity, but their spiritual and eternal welfare, — *even the perfecting of the saints, and edifying of the body of Christ.* It is intended for *pulling down strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and for bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ* ; — uniformly bearing a principal reference unto the other world, and the concerns thereof. — The qualifications of its subjects, and the terms or conditions of enjoying its peculiar privileges : which are very different from those that may justly enough entitle persons unto the several privileges and advantages of the civil state or worldly kingdom. — The laws thereto belonging ; all which are spiritual, holy, just, and good ; — binding unto a spiritual and internal, as well as external obedience. — The sanctions annexed unto these laws, for enforcing obedience to them among its subjects ; which indeed are of a very different nature from those that may of right be annexed unto the laws of an earthly kingdom. — The weapons of warfare therein used ; all which are spiritual, and calculated for striking and affecting the conscience, or inward man only, &c. &c.

Here there is no visible legislation, king or lawgiver, as in the kingdoms of this world ; the church's sole King and Lawgiver having ascended up on high, there to continue, as to his bodily presence, until the time of the restitution of all things. So that from henceforth we see him no more with the carnal eye : but

* The church itself is a thing absolutely separate and distinct from the commonwealth. The boundaries on both sides are fixed and immovable. He jumbles heaven and earth together, the things most remote and opposite, who mixes these societies ; which are in their original, end, business, and in every thing perfectly distinct, and infinitely different from each other." *Locke on toleration, p. 43.*

yet all his genuine subjects *endure as seeing him who is invisible*; and have their conversation in heaven, from whence also they look for, and are in constant expectation of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.—Here there is no use of the material sword, or carnal weapons; as of right obtains in the earthly kingdom. *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world, &c.*—As if he had said, That kingdom, which I own and avow as my peculiar kingdom, is of a very different nature and kind from the kingdoms of this world, the subjects whereof do fight with material weapons; as, beside other considerations, appears from hence, that, even at such a critical conjuncture of my affairs as the present is, I am not allowing my servants thus to fight in my behalf: So far from it, that when one of them, out of a mistaken zeal and regard for me, drew his sword to fight in this manner, I checked him; and thence took occasion to discharge the use of the material sword, and all other such weapons, in my cause and kingdom, in all time coming. And therefore the kingdoms of this world, and the rulers thereof, have nothing to fear from my kingdom, or my servants conforming themselves to the laws and maxims thereof.—Here are no methods of outward force and violence; but the gentle methods of Christian persuasion only: nothing of worldly pleasure and pain, or temporal rewards and punishments; such as, the offices, riches, and honours of the civil state, on the one hand; and civil pains, or even the lesser negative sort of discouragements, which deprive men of their natural rights as good subjects of the earthly kingdom, on the other: for the glorious King of the kingdom whereof we speak, did not make choice of the motives and engines of this world for promoting and enforcing a kingdom, which he hath expressly declared not to be of this world.—The gospel of Christ is pure; and consequently peaceable. As the things of God, the truths and institutions of Christ, shine in their own light; so they prevail by their own evidence,—unadorned, undriven by human wisdom and force. But that which is merely the contrivance of men, must have the honours and rewards of this world to set it off; the threatenings of this world, temporal evils and pains, to make it go.

I shall only add, that the introducing of the engines of this world, carnal power and policy, &c. into the church and kingdom of Christ, would seem in so far to change the nature of it from a kingdom not of this world, into a kingdom of this world, contrary to our Lord's express declaration;—and also, in so far to make the kingdom pass from him as the sole King and Lawgiver thereof, unto some others as copartners with him in that kingdom, or as so far kings in his stead.

Having thus freely imparted unto you the thoughts which occurred

curred to my mind from the aforementioned words of our Lord; permit me to subjoin some more notes from the Prelate's sermon, which I had occasion to mention in my last, — which are not foreign to the matters treated of in this. — “ If, therefore, the church of Christ be the kingdom of Christ; it is essential to it, that Christ himself be the sole Lawgiver, and sole Judge of his subjects, in all points relating to the favour or displeasure of almighty God; and that all his subjects, in what station soever they may be, are equally subjects to him; and that no one of them, any more than another, hath authority to make new laws for Christ's subjects. — The laws of this kingdom, therefore, as Christ left them, have nothing of this world in their view: no tendency, either to the exaltation of some, in worldly pomp and dignity; or to their absolute dominion over the faith and religious conduct of others of his subjects; or to the erecting of any sort of temporal kingdom, under the covert and name of a spiritual one *.

“ The sanctions of Christ's laws are rewards and punishments.

* His Lordship's phraseology here puts me in mind of what “ I have some reasons for suspecting,” Mr Moncrieff would readily observe upon my view of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, and its distinction from the kingdoms of this world, as expressed in this letter; namely, that he is for a spiritual kingdom to Christ, as well as I am; but another sort of a spiritual kingdom: for my view of its spirituality, makes it so spiritual, as that it could not be in the world; and would exclude the rulers of this world from exerting their power and authority for bringing about, and supporting a national reformation. What sort of a spiritual kingdom this gentleman is for to Christ, I cannot well say; but I have good ground both for thinking, and saying, that it is quite another than that above delineated. — Whether my view of the general nature of Christ's kingdom, and its distinction from the kingdoms of this world, makes it so spiritual as that it cannot be in the world; — I shall leave with others to judge. Strange! cannot a kingdom, which the glorious King thereof has expressly declared not to be of this world, be in the world; unless it be driven and supported by the engines of this world, the sanctions of the secular magistrate? Moreover, I do not see how my view of this matter, can be the least bar in the way of any reformation needful for gospel churches, that is, a reformation of the doctrine, worship, and discipline, professed and practised in them, — or of the lives and conversations of the members individually considered; all which can be, and really is effected and brought about by the Spirit poured from on high upon backsliding churches and professors, — without the compulsory methods of civil authority: although, at the same time, I am sensible, these methods, which, it is acknowledged, my view will not admit of, are highly necessary for bringing about and supporting the covenanted cause, Mr Moncrieff is so very zealous for; that is, a strict national uniformity, without toleration.

“ But

“ But of what sort ? Not the rewards of this world ; not the offices or glories of this state ; not the pains of prisons, banishments, fines, or any lesser and more moderate penalties ; nay, not the much lesser negative discouragements that belong to human society. — But as the great end of his kingdom was to guide men to happiness, after the short images of it were over here below ; so he took his motives from that place, where his kingdom first began, and where it was at last to end ; from those rewards and punishments in a future state, which had no relation to this world : and, to shew that his kingdom was not of this world, all the sanctions which he thought fit to give to his laws, were not of this world at all. St Paul understood this so well, that he gives an account of his own conduct, and that of others in the same station, in these words : *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.* Whereas, in too many Christian countries, since his days, if some who profess to succeed him, were to give an account of their conduct, it must be in a quite contrary strain : *Knowing the terrors of this world, and having them in our power, we do not persuade men, but force their outward profession against their inward persuasion.*

“ Now, where-ever this is practised, whether in a great degree or a small, in that place there is so far a change from a kingdom which is not of this world, to a kingdom which is of this world. As soon as ever you hear of any of the engines of this world, whether of the greater or lesser sort, you must immediately think that then, and so far, the kingdom of this world takes place. — In all, or any of these cases, to apply force or flattery, worldly pleasure or pain, is to act contrary to the interest of true religion, as it is plainly opposite unto the maxims upon which Christ founded his kingdom ; who chose the motives which are not of this world, to support a kingdom which is not of this world. And, indeed, it is too visible to be hid, that where-ever the rewards and punishments are changed, from future to present, from the world to come, to the world now in possession : there the kingdom founded by our Saviour is, in the nature of it, so far changed, that it is become, in such a degree, what he professed his kingdom was not : that is, of this world ; of the same sort with other common earthly kingdoms, in which the rewards are, worldly honours, posts, offices, pomp, attendance, dominion ; and the punishments are, prisons, fines, banishments, galleys, and racks ; or something less, of the same sort. —

“ And therefore, when you see our Lord, in his methods, so far removed from those of many of his disciples ; when you read nothing, in his doctrine about his own kingdom, of ta-
“ king

“ king in the concerns of this world, and mixing them with
 “ those of eternity ; no commands that the frowns and discour-
 “ ragements of this present state should in any case attend upon
 “ conscience and religion ; — no orders for the kind and chari-
 “ table force of penalties, or capital punishments, to make men
 “ think and chuse aright ; no calling upon the secular arm,
 “ whenever the magistrate should become Christian, to enforce
 “ his doctrines, or to back his spiritual authority ; but, on the
 “ contrary, as plain a declaration as a few words can make, that
 “ his kingdom is not of this world : I say, when you see this,
 “ from the whole tenor of the gospel, so vastly opposite to many
 “ who take his name into their mouths, the question with you
 “ ought to be, Whether he did not know the nature of his own
 “ kingdom or church better than any since his time ? Whether
 “ you can suppose, he left any such matters to be decided against
 “ himself, and his own express professions ; and whether, if an
 “ angel from heaven should give you any account of his king-
 “ dom, contrary to what he himself hath done, it can be of any
 “ weight or authority with Christians ?” — Thus far the dig-
 nified preacher, even in the royal audience. The doctrine re-
 quires no comment, and certainly merits the attention of all the
 officers and subjects of Zion’s KING. — *I am, &c.*

L E T T E R XV.

*Containing remarks on a sermon of Mr Gib’s, relative to the
 manner of swearing the Seceders covenant.*

S I R,

I INTENDED to have finished my present correspondence with you, with my last. But having elsewhere referred unto certain *salvos* which you have seen meet to prescribe for delicate consciences, one would be apt to think, with a view to help them forward in taking the covenant imposed by the Associate Synod, however ignorant they should be of a great part of the subject-matter thereof ; a particular friend of mine begged me to explain myself more fully with regard thereto. This, at first instance, I was not very fond of doing ; but at length, yielding to my friend’s importunity, I thought proper to do it in another epistle to yourself.

The *salvos* I had in view, are those contained in a broken sermon of yours, subjoined to Mr Morison’s *Attempt to vindicate, explain, and enforce the important duty of renewing our solemn covenants*. That author being a very faithful friend and ally of
 yours ;

yours; particularly when you are in danger of being brought to trouble on account of turning out of their seats, upon any slight displeasure, constituent members of your kirk-session, by the mere dint of a *protest* taken by yourself in that inferior judicatory, without appealing or remonstrating unto either of the superior ones;—you, in your turn, as duty is, support him in the character of an *author*,—ushering in his works to the *Public* with epistles-recommendatory, and even recommending them from your pulpit: which, considering the many great services you have done to the Antiburgher Secession-interest, may be of excellent use for making them sell better among those of that way. Thus, you have seen meet to introduce and recommend his *Attempt*, in particular. Upon reading your epistle-recommendatory thereto prefixed, sundry things occurred to my mind: but, as it would take up too much, of both your time and mine, to go through them all; I shall only mention the few following.

“ Having perused Mr Morison’s manuscript of the following “ sermons,” say you, “ I readily took the oversight of it at the “ press,” (and, I suppose, the trouble of adding foot-notes too); “ as judging that these sermons may, through the Lord’s blessing, be more useful for instruction about the present state of “ covenanting-work, than any thing that I have hitherto seen “ published upon the subject.” I am obliged to differ from your judgment with regard to the peculiar usefulness of these sermons “ for instruction about the *present state of covenanting-work*;” —beside other reasons, for this, that therein is barefacedly preached down the commonly-received doctrine of the civil magistrate’s power in matters of revealed religion,—which is an essential ingredient of *the present state of covenanting-work*;—inasmuch as there we are taught, that civil magistrates, in that character and capacity, cannot judge of matters of revealed religion, nor, consequently, impose them upon their subjects under civil penalties;—that although Jewish rulers might warrantably do this with regard to the Israelitish nation, yet civil magistrates under the gospel are not authorised so to do, *p.* 18. 19.;—and that, as free-born subjects, we have a right to liberty of conscience, *p.* 67. And, I hope, he will grant, that the other free-born British subjects have an equal right hereunto with the Seceders: for, although they make a monopoly of *the Lord’s cause and testimony*, they must not do so with regard to this “ precious natural “ right of mankind” too,—I mean, *liberty of conscience*. These and the like sentiments, your good self also hath given a very full and ample sanction unto, in your letter to the author of the Scots Magazine. But, sure, such *Sectarian* tenets and opinions as these, are utterly inconsistent with the *present state of covenanting-work*, yea, and *the former states* of it in Britain too, ad-

opted and taken up by Seceders in *the present state* of it ;—utterly inconsistent with the covenants, and covenant-scheme of a national uniformity in religion, without toleration. However your brethren, Mess. Blyth, Moncrieff, &c. and I, may have differed in some other things ; if they mean to be self-consistent, we must certainly agree in this. How therefore you and they agree, or put up matters together, I cannot so well say.

How widely you and your friend differ from the commonly-reputed orthodox, relative to the civil magistrate's power *circa sacra*, will at first sight appear from the state of that question given in — *A defence of national churches against the Independents, by a minister of the church of Scotland* ; published anno 1729. The defender, after declaring what the orthodox maintain, adds, —“ On the other hand, *Libertines*, and those who are for toleration, contend, that the magistrate hath no more power concerning church matters than any other private believer : he is not to be concerned what any man in his dominions teach or worship, if he be a good subject. *Every man hath right to liberty of conscience, to chuse and judge for himself.* All that the magistrate hath to do, is to keep the different sects from destroying one another, and prevent what may be injurious to the civil society,” p. 190. And, agreeably to this state of the question, he attacks the late Bishop Hoadly, as heretical or heterodox, for teaching, “ that because Christ's kingdom is not of this world, religion is not to be promoted by worldly sanctions, that is, by temporal rewards and punishments. The magistrate is to make use of no worldly motives for that end ; but religion and the worship of God ought to be left entirely to the sanctions of another world, &c.” p. 189. Now, Sir, do not you in your letter, and your friend in his sermons, evidently take what is there declared to be the *libertine* and *heterodox* side of that important question ? And, sure, you could not but know, that said *Defence* is held in great estimation among those of your way, and with much approbation referred unto in some of their writings ; see, for instance, Mr Wilson's *Defence*, against Mr Currie, p. 36.

I have said before, that you have given up with the original principles of the Secession, in some points, particularly with reference to the civil magistrate's power in matters of religion. And indeed, the more closely I consider the sentiments of your letter, the more firmly am I persuaded hereof. Besides what has been already offered to this purpose, I shall now add as follows. —“ At the time of the reformation in the last century,” say you, “ some specious remains of the leaven of that abomination [compulsive methods of dealing with men in matters of conscience or mere religion] had not been got entirely purged

“ out ;

“ out ; the natural rights of conscience were not generally understood ; and some working of that leaven, in the compulsory terms which the Presbyterians of the English parliament, and Westminster assembly, stood upon,” &c. Now, pray, whose are the principles, relative to the civil magistrate’s power in matters of conscience or mere religion,” which Seceders have solemnly espoused, and engaged to cleave unto all the days of their lives ? Are they not the principles of those very men,—the reformers in the last century, and the Westminster assembly in particular ? For was it not that assembly, with the assistance of a few commissioners from the church of Scotland, (who were as much addicted to “ compulsive methods,” &c. as their brethren in England), that compiled the Westminster Confession of Faith ? Sure, these men, when sitting in assembly, would not dissemble, but honestly vote and deliver what they really believed and maintained, on this as well as other heads of doctrine. Charity obliges us to believe, that they really did so ; especially considering the solemn oath taken by every member at his admission, in these words : — “ I A. B. do seriously promise and vow, in the presence of almighty God, That in this assembly, whereof I am a member, I will maintain nothing in point of doctrine, but what I believe to be most agreeable to the word of God ; nor in point of discipline, but what may make most for God’s glory, and the peace and good of this church.” Whence it is plain, that the passages of the Confession relative to the magistrate’s power in religion, must contain in them a delivery of the genuine principles and sentiments of the compilers on that head. And that these are the original principles of Seceders, is beyond all doubt ; since they bind themselves by a solemn oath unto the *whole* doctrine of that Confession ; and, consequently, to the just now mentioned passages among the rest. Now, what sort of principles these are, which Seceders thus espouse and engage to cleave unto, may easily be gathered from the account you have given of the framers of the Confession, even such principles as are in so far at least for “ compulsive methods of dealing with men in matters of conscience or mere religion ;” — principles therefore inconsistent with, or flowing from mistaken notions of “ the natural rights of conscience ;” and which accordingly lead those who have them to “ stand upon compulsory terms with” all who happen to differ from themselves about religion, provided they be in such circumstances as that they can act up to these their principles. Such, I say, according to your own account, (whether just or unjust, is not presently the question), must the principles of Seceders be ; unless you mean to impeach the Westminster assembly of dissimulation or disingenuity in voting and framing the Confession. Well but these principles you

have renounced, as having been "projected by Satan transformed into an angel of light," and as "having a chief place among Antichrist's abominations." Doubtless, therefore, you must be of very different principles from the Seceders on this head.

And whereas you, in your letter, say, that "such methods, introduced under the first Christian emperors, and for some time used in behalf of the truth, were not fitted for any real service in the kingdom of Christ;" you must certainly know, that here you are out of the common road altogether: for do not all who are reputed orthodox on this head agree, in highly extolling the methods of civil power and authority which those emperors used "in behalf of the truth." Yea, and such is their opinion of the fitness of methods of that kind for "real service in the kingdom of Christ," that fundries of them have maintained, they came into the church of Christ in the room of miracles, which, they say, continued to accompany the preaching of the word until the conversion of Constantine, — when the want of them came to be made up by the application and use of the Imperial power and authority "in behalf of the truth," or for enforcing church deeds and determinations, which then ensued; see *A defence of national churches*, p. 207.: which had also been urged and pled by several other advocates for the civil magistrate's power *circa sacra* before him.

I shall only add here, that it is a great question with me, if the sentiments published to the world by you and your friend be not everfive of *national churches* altogether, in the sense in which they have generally been understood and contended for. Neither am I singular this way. The defender of national churches, just now mentioned, is plainly on my side. And beside him, I shall give you the authority of another defender of national churches, who lived on the other side of the Tweed: — "It is hard to say what it [the lower house of convocation] could have done less than was done, while it was in a capacity of acting, with respect to the sermon [Hoadly's before the King], when the whole tendency thereof so manifestly is, to weaken, make vile, and subvert, not only that authority, with regard to religion, which flows from the constitution of this national church, and is necessarily exercised under it; but that also, without which there cannot be any national Christian church on the face of the earth." For it may here be observed, that the authority and interest which the magistrate hath in matters of religion, is the only ground of national churches subsisting both under the institutions of the gospel, and the obligations of natural religion." *Cannon's vindication*

dedication of the proceedings of the lower house of convocation; &c. p. 10. In my view, you have not been far behind with his Lordship, in “weakening, making vile, and subverting that “authority and interest of the magistrate in matters of religion, without which,” according to this orthodox national church-man, “there cannot be any national Christian church on “the face of the earth;” and which therefore “is the only “ground of such churches.” Your brethren and adherents then would need to be aware of you; lest, perchance, you should juggle them out of national churches, and national covenanting altogether; in which case, their whole national scheme must drop.—But to proceed:

“After advising with the author,” say you,” I have thought “proper to add a sermon upon the warrants for public covenanting,—preached on July 10. 1757; being the only sermon “among many about covenanting work, which I had fully “written; as also, a part of a sermon, preached on August “11. the same year, upon the manner of public covenanting; “both from Neh. ix. 38.” It is this last, that I mean to offer some thoughts upon. Some have both thought and said, that certainly you are sensible, your word and authority will go a very great length, and have much weight with Seceders; or you would not have taken the trouble of writing out the notes you had of that sermon at large, and preparing them for the press. But that implies such a base and diminutive insinuation, with regard to your abilities as displayed therein, that I cannot allow myself to insist on it; especially as I am satisfied your pulpit-talents, when applied to several other subjects, are far from being despicable.

“I may observe here,” add you, “that the substance of what “is pled for, is public covenanting, as distinguished from that “which is private or personal: and that its being national is only a circumstance; from the body of a nation, in their religious capacity, concurring to that work. It may also be observed,—That national covenanting can only be by the body of “a nation, as in a church-state: but a renewing of national “covenants, though not a national renewing of them,—may be “by a smaller number of church-members.” And here I, in my turn, may also observe,

1. That what is pled for by Seceders on this head is, not only public covenanting, as distinguished from that which is private or personal; but also national covenanting, as distinguished from church-covenanting,—such, for instance, as was practised among those of the Congregational way in the last century. Besides that this is clear from their writings; I have elsewhere produced the authority of one of your brethren, who is of no small

small standing or reputation, for it. It is evidently *national* covenanting, properly so called, that was meant by our ancestors in imposing and entering into the national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant of the three kingdoms, in the last century; as, among other considerations, appears from hence, that the swearing and subscribing of the solemn league was made a fundamental article of a *national* treaty, a treaty between Scotland and England in their *national* capacity. Which very covenants Seceders have expressly taken up, and do renew, or at least pretend to renew, in their covenant compiled by the Associate Presbytery. And therefore,

2. If that of covenanting's being *national*, be only a *circumstance*; certainly it is a very material *circumstance* with regard to that sort of covenanting *pled for*, although not, indeed, in any proper sense, *practised* by Seceders; that being impracticable for them in their present situation, when the *heads or representatives of the nation* are not concurring with them in that work, nor exerting their power and influence for bringing the *body of the nation* to it. So very material and important is this *circumstance*, that, *viz.* of covenanting's being *national*, properly so called, that the want of it (which indeed is matter of great lamentation among them) destroys the sort of covenanting they are contending for altogether.

3. *National* covenanting, properly so called, is by the *body of a nation* concurring to that work, not only "in their religious capacity, or as in a church-state;" but also in their *civil capacity* or *national state*. The nation and kingdom, or *body politic*, as such, must enter into the covenant. "The body of the nation must concur unto that work," in the *different capacities* in which they stand and act in the civil state or worldly kingdom. Thus much is implied in the very idea of its being *national*. And particularly, the concurrence of the *heads or representatives of the nation*, in their high station and capacity, is absolutely necessary. This is a *circumstance* which, in my view, cannot at all be dispensed with, in order to its being *national*. Of this sort plainly is the *national* covenanting intended in the *covenants* of these lands; as hath been in so far shewn in a former letter, to which I now refer. And therefore I shall only add, as a further proof hereof, the pompous parade of worldly titles and distinctions of men, with which the solemn league begins:—"We noblemen, barons, knights, gentlemen, citizens, burgessees, ministers of the gospel, and commons of all sorts in the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland." All which different orders and ranks of men, engage to act in their several stations and callings, in the prosecution of the ends of the covenant; as appears from the express articles thereof.

4. As

4. As to your distinction between a *renewing* of national covenants, and a *national renewing* of them ; it is rather too nice and metaphysical for me to understand. It is not easy to conceive how there can be any *proper renewing* of national covenants, without a *national renewing* of them. But, perhaps, I will understand this better, when you are pleased to explain it more fully, and so render it more intelligible.

I now proceed to take a brief view of the sermon itself. — After speaking somewhat “ of the *external manner* and form of “ *covenanting-work*,” — you propose to speak of “ the *internal manner* of it, with respect to the state of the mind, and the “ *method of the heart’s exercise* in such solemn work.” — But instead of favouring the public with your thoughts at any length on this, you immediately add, by way of parenthesis, — “ (The “ *greatest part of the discourse* was an extemporary enlargement upon short notes, — as to going about the work *conscientiously*” (I wish this were more attended unto), “ *evangelically, believingly, and joyfully*. What here follows is only “ the first particular ; with the enlargement upon it, which had “ been fully wrote).”

“ This work of solemn covenanting,” say you, “ ought to “ be gone about *intelligently*, Neh. x. 28. Jer. iv. 2. Persons “ should act in this matter, not ignorantly and rashly ; but with “ understanding and knowledge of what they are doing.” Thus far certainly you say very well. But knowing what sort of an oath you was leading the poor people into, and the impracticability of their (many of them at least) swearing it in such a manner, you found it would not be expedient to proceed far in this strain, and therefore you forthwith desist ; yea, and even qualify what you had so said. — “ We do not say,” add you, “ that “ it is absolutely necessary for persons to be versed in controversies about these things which the *acknowledgment of sins* and “ the *engagement to duties* contain, — or to be capable of disputing about these matters : for this cannot be the ordinary attainment of the Lord’s people, nor the duty of all to seek.” This certainly was a very necessary caution to your purpose. And upon it I may observe, that, in any ordinary way, it is *absolutely impossible* for the far greater part of the covenanters “ to be versed in controversies about these things which the *acknowledgment of sins* and the *engagement to duties* contain, — “ or to be capable of disputing about these matters.” And therefore I heartily agree with you in this, — that “ this cannot be “ the ordinary attainment of the Lord’s people, nor the duty “ of all to seek.” It is much rather, both their duty and interest to seek after more and more acquaintance with those *better things which accompany salvation*, and *wherewith one may edify another* :

another;—to be searching the scriptures which testify of precious Christ, and exercised in the believing contemplation, use-making, and improvement of him, as therein testified of.—But yet, at the same time, I must add, that certainly it is the duty of the Lord's people to seek to be in case, *to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. If at any time they bind themselves with a solemn oath, all their days to contend and testify against certain things, and for certain other things; one would think, it were their duty to seek to be in case to give some reasons of their so doing from the holy scriptures; at any rate, it cannot be their duty to do so in a blind implicit manner, — without knowing and understanding all and every the things which they thus interpose a solemn oath about. This would be inconsistent with any due consideration of the weightiness and importance of the act of swearing. What I have just now said, is a *received and sworn-to principle* among you: hence the Westminster Confession, chap. 22. sect. 3.—“Whosoever taketh an oath, ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and therein to avouch nothing, but what he is *fully persuaded* is the truth; “neither may any man bind himself by an oath to any thing, but “what is good and just, and what *he believeth* so to be, and “what he is able and resolved to perform.” Do all the covenanters act up to this principle, in swearing the covenant imposed by you and your brethren? Agreeably to this passage of the Confession, Mr Hog sometime of Carnock, in a print relative to covenanting, with regard to the requisites thereof, says,—“It ought to be done with understanding of the matter, and call, “and *every thing pertaining thereto*.” But dare you say, that all who join in the Secession-bond, are possessed of this requisite of covenanting? I am sure, you cannot.

This general caution of yours, on the head of swearing in knowledge and understanding, you proceed to illustrate by a particular instance:—“And we cannot suppose it absolutely necessary for persons to understand the particulars of the Popish controversy; or to be acquainted with all the particular abominations of Popery, which are mentioned in the *national covenant*. It is a great mercy, that the Lord's people in this land have not now such a woful occasion of understanding these things,—as in the time of the first reformation: It is a great mercy that gospel-light hath so long ago dispelled these works of darkness, — which the common people then might too readily understand.” Thus far I am perfectly agreed with you. And hence I would conclude, that “we cannot suppose “it absolutely necessary for persons” *upon oath to abjure* “the “particulars of the Popish controversy, or all the particular ab-

ominations

“ominations of Popery, which are mentioned in the national
“covenant.” I am truly at a great loss to see the necessity of
obliging the disciples of Christ in Britain and Ireland at this day,
thus to abjure the trumpery of the church of Rome, called
Popery,—either in more general, or more particular terms. If,
as yourself affirm, the Lord’s people in our land have not now
such a woful occasion of knowing the errors and abominations
of Popery, as those who lived in the time of the first reformation
had; gospel-light having so long ago dispelled those works
of darkness;—would not one take the native consequence hereof
to be, that neither have they the same occasion or call, in such
a solemn and explicit manner to renounce or abjure them? But
you reason otherwise; and, indeed, teach the strangest doctrine
here, that ever I remember to have seen taught by any Protestant
divine: for, add you,—“And these particulars are not
“specified in the bond which is now proposed for renewing our
“covenants; as persons may now, with a sufficient measure of
“knowledge, renounce the body of Popish idolatry and errors,
“—without understanding all the particulars which are com-
“prehended in it. We may be sure, that all the members of
“that Antichristian body are like itself; and need not be soli-
“citous about knowing these depths of Satan.” This strikes
me in such a light (whether true or false, shall be submitted un-
to others), that I cannot help thinking, doctrine of this sort
(the general doctrine, you know, will apply to other things, as
well as that to which it is here applied) might pass at Rome, the
seat of the beast; and, otherwise applied, be of excellent use
for promoting the abominations of Popery. For does it not
smell rank of these cardinal points of Antichristianism? name-
ly, *ignorance being the mother of devotion*; and *believing as the
church believes*, or, *yielding an implicit faith and blind subjection
unto the dictates of the clergy*. Beware therefore, Sir, lest, un-
der a pretence of teaching the people to swear away *Romish*
Popery, you introduce and establish a sort of *Protestant Popery*;
which, in the event, may turn out to be as pernicious as the
other.

Here I would ask,—how we can possibly, *with a sufficient
measure of knowledge*, renounce *the body* of Popish idolatry and
errors,—without understanding *the particulars* which are com-
prehended in it? Can we have a sufficient measure of know-
ledge of *a body*, without understanding *its members*? or of *a
whole*, without being acquainted with *its parts*? What can
people know of that Antichristian body, or its members, all
which are said to be like itself; if they do not understand the
particular errors and abominations of Popery? And, in case
of their not understanding these, can they, in a consistency
T with

with common sense, be supposed, with a sufficient measure of knowledge, to abjure that *Antichristian body*, — however vague and general the abjuration should be?—I readily grant, Popery is a very bad thing. And therefore it gives me pleasure, that, for all the cramp names, and frightful sort of epithets, I have got from those of your way,—I have not yet heard of their calling me a *Papist*. But bad as it is, really I would have no freedom to lead on poor people unto a solemn swearing of it away, who knew little or nothing at all of its particular errors and abominations; because, in my view, that would be using too much freedom with that great and dreadful name, *JEHOVAH* our God,—yea, would seem to be a taking of it in vain. Sure, this at best would be but the abjuring of an *unknown something*, —a sound without a sense. And what good end could possibly be reached by such a blind abjuration? It could not be any barrier unto the swearers against *Popish errors*: for even supposing them to pay ever so sacred a regard unto their oath, they might adopt all or most of these abominations, without being sensible of their doing so. And the same may be said of other errors and evils also, ignorantly and implicitly abjured.—Moreover, if this sort of doctrine were once admitted and established, the most dismal consequences might follow thereon. For instance, deceivers and designing men might impose upon, and prevail with weak unwary people, to abjure the most precious Bible-truths,—by just telling and endeavouring to get them persuaded, that these are Popish errors: for, as I said before, the general doctrine will apply to other things as well as Popery. And thus, at length, a wide door and effectual would be opened for the introduction of rank Popery, in its full vigour and height. May the good Lord therefore preserve simple people from giving heed unto such dangerous doctrine, from whatever quarter it should come!

Having thus fixed your preliminary caution, you proceed to declare what measure of knowledge and understanding of the subject-matter of the oath, is necessary in order to persons swearing it:—"But, in general, *say you*, it is necessary that persons " have such an understanding of what is contained in the *Ac-*
 " *knowledge of sins and Engagement to duties*,—that they know
 " the ordinary meaning of the terms there used; that they take
 " up the meaning of the definitions which are there given of
 " the errors abjured,—understanding and being satisfied in their
 " consciences, that these are really errors to be contended and
 " testified against: that they have such understanding of the
 " truths and ordinances of the Lord's house there mentioned
 " and referred unto, as to be satisfied about their duty of e-

" spousing and cleaving unto them,—knowing and understand-

" ing

“ ing the general import of these matters : and that they be so far acquainted with the public evils of the day there mentioned, as to understand that they are really evils to be testified against.”

Here certainly you bring the requisite of swearing in *judgment and understanding*, as low as it can well be brought : I do not see how you can condescend much lower this way, without barefacedly pleading for ignorant and implicit swearing in express terms. And yet, I must think, there are hundreds of Seceders, who nevertheless may be good serious Christians, that cannot in any ordinary way be supposed to be possessed even of this your own *necessary* requisite of swearing the Secession-covenant, in *judgment and understanding*. — I have elsewhere said *, and do still stand to it, that there are not a few even of the covenanters themselves, who do not so much as “ know the ordinary meaning of ” several of “ the terms there used.” — Nor do they all “ take up the meaning of the definitions there given of ” some of “ the errors abjured.” Do they all understand the true nature and tendency of the several tenets and opinions abjured, under the notion of errors ? The preceding paragraph of your sermon led me to consider Popery to this purpose, or in this point of view. I shall now proceed to mention some other things. Do all Seceders know what are the precise points abjured, under the name of *Arminianism* ? Are they all acquainted with the particular heads of doctrine held by *Jacobus Arminius* and his followers, which were condemned by the Synod of *Dort*, and which, I suppose, are meant to be abjured in the covenant ? — Do they all understand what are the particular doctrines and opinions sworn away, under the designation of *Latitudinarian tenets* ? — Again, are all the covenanters certified of what they engage to contend and testify against, under the name of *Prelacy* ? I suppose, even the definition given hereof in the second article of the solemn league, will not much help a good many of them. What sort of ideas have they, or some of them at least, annexed unto the several particular branches thereof ? Perhaps, they do not at all know what is meant by “ archbishops, bishops ; ” much less, — “ their chancellors and commissaries, deans, deans and “ chapters, archdeacons.” — And whom may we suppose them to understand as intended in the general abjuring clause, — “ and “ all other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy ? ” May it not be safely affirmed, that many of them know no more of these different orders of the English hierarchy, than they do of the several orders of the Romish clergy ? If to this you should apply what you have observed before with regard to Popery, namely, that these particulars are not specified in the

* See my letter to a gentleman in Edinburgh, p. 17.

bond which is now proposed for renewing our covenants; as persons may now, with a sufficient measure of knowledge, renounce the *body* of that ecclesiastical hierarchy,—without understanding the *particulars* comprehended in it;—I shall just refer you unto what I have already said on that.—Further, do all the covenanters know what they abjure, under the appellation of *Independency*; or what are the precise points and articles meant to be sworn away, under that head? They will probably be in case to tell you, it is a *very bad thing*; but I am sure, that is the most some of them can say of it. Sundry other things might have been instanced in; but I must not enlarge. And if the above be a just representation of the case, how can the covenanters possibly “understand and be satisfied in their consciences, that these are really errors to be contended and testified against?” For, in order hereunto, one would think it absolutely necessary, that they should at least know what these errors, or tenets and opinions so called, really are.

I shall now touch at what you observe relative to their knowledge of “the *truths and ordinances of the Lord’s house* mentioned or referred unto in the Bond and Acknowledgment of sins.” It is abundantly evident, that you apprehend, a very superficial knowledge of the things declared by fallible and uninspired men to be “the truths and ordinances of the Lord’s house,” is sufficient in order to persons “espousing and cleaving to them,” as such. But although what you affirm here should be admitted as sufficient, do all Seceders even know thus much? Do they all even know and understand the *general import* of every matter there mentioned and referred to, as a truth or ordinance of the Lord’s house? For instance; do they all understand what is meant even by *Presbyterial church-government* itself, the sound whereof at least rings often enough in their ears?—what are the particular branches or members it consists of; and what its distinguishing peculiarities, both from *Episcopal* government on the one hand, and the *Congregational* plan on the other?—what are the several degrees of the subordination of judicatories, included in *classical Presbytery*; and what the powers wherewith these juridical church-courts respectively are invested? wherein they differ from the consultative meetings which obtain, or were wont to obtain among those of the Congregational way both in *Old* and *New England*? &c. I must not launch out into particular instances here. Now, if they have not at least thus much understanding of the several matters there mentioned, as *truths and ordinances of the Lord’s house*; how come they in any judicious way to be satisfied about their duty, not merely of *espousing and cleaving* unto them, as truths and ordinances of the Lord’s house,

house, — but of *binding themselves with an oath and a curse* so to do all the days of their lives?

Moreover, it is beyond all controversy, that many Seceders are not “so far acquainted with” all the things “there mentioned and referred to as *public evils* of the day,” particularly some of the many things which relate to the *civil constitution* and *administration* of Great Britain,—as in any scriptural or rational way “to understand they are really evils to be testified against” or abjured *. Here at present I shall only instance in the *repeal of the penal statutes against witches*: concerning which the covenanters solemnly declare, p. 109. “The *penal statutes* against “*witches* have been repealed by the parliament, contrary to the “express law of God.”—Upon this part of the oath and covenant I would ask,—Do all the covenanters know what those *penal statutes*, thus affirmed to be repealed, were;—whether just or unjust, whether good or bad *statutes*, whether agreeable to the law of God or not? Have they all seen and perused those *statutes*, so as to know what terms they were conceived in? Can they all with certainty say, what were the precise *penalties* annexed by those *statutes* unto *witchcraft*;—whether they were the same prescribed by the Jewish lawgiver unto that nation, or not? Moreover, do they all know in what terms the *repeal* of said *statutes* is conceived? how far it extends? &c. To me it is a great question, whether even some of your brethren in the ministry, and much more hundreds of the people, have any certain knowledge of these and the like particulars at all. How then come they “to understand, that this really is an evil to be testified against?” Or how are they capable of swearing *in judgment*, that the parliament’s *repealing* said *statutes*, was “contrary to “the express law of God?”—Whereas you speak of the things mentioned in the *Acknowledgment of sins*, in bulk, as *public evils of the day*, and afterwards, as “being evils which *are* sadly and “notourly taking place;” I hope, you do not mean to affirm, that all these things, without exception, are actually taking place in the *present time*;—such as, the oaths, declarations, and bonds, imposed after the restoration of K. Charles II. the grievous persecution of those who stedfastly adhered to the covenanted national uniformity in that period; the indulgences; the reading of Porteous-act; Cambuslang-work, &c. Credulous as the most of your followers are, I should think, you would not easily get them persuaded into the belief of this. Were the matter put to a fair and impartial trial among the people of the Secession, and neutral disinterested persons allowed to be the judges; I should venture my character and reputation upon all

* See my letter to a gentleman in Edinburgh, p. 19. 20. 21. 22.

or most of the preceding particulars. And, Sir, permit me to say, that, according to common fame, you cannot with any degree of certainty contradict me herein, even with regard to your own people whom you have brought under that solemn oath: for, I am informed, all you do, or at least was wont to do with them, is just from the pulpit to desire such as are intending to join in that work, to wait upon the *Session* at the time you appoint;—when they are asked, if they have read the *judicial Testimony*, and *Act for renewing the covenants*?—If they approve of the same? and such like general questions;—without ever making the least particular trial of their understanding of the subject-matter of that so very prolix and intricate oath: only, 'if any say, they are labouring under scruples and difficulties about it; you will, perhaps, be as condescending, as desire them to wait upon you at your own house,—when you will, no doubt, apply such salves as those you here offer, both from the pulpit and the press. Truly, Sir, when I compare what is said to be your practice this way, (and I have no doubt of the truth of my information), with your doctrine in this sermon; I know not what to think. If this be true, can it be believed, that you are duly impressed with the weight and awful solemnity of an oath, and the danger of rash and ignorant swearing by the name of the *Lord our God*?

Immediately after the passage I have been just now considering, you add these soothing words, (I so call them from the obvious design for which they are here thrown out):—"And for persons to have their consciences resolved in these matters before the Lord, by the light of his word and the guidance of his Spirit,—will be far preferable to such measures of speculative knowledge otherwise, as might render them capable of disputing these points to good purpose. The greatest part of Christ's witnesses hitherto, have not been among the most knowing persons; but such as were more capable of burning than of disputing for him," (I am not sure, if you yourself would chuse to burn for every thing mentioned or referred to in the *Acknowledgment of sins*), "when his grace supported them in fiery trials."

I readily admit the truth of what is here asserted, in the general: for, doubtless, divine teaching is infinitely preferable to mere speculative knowledge, however bright:—and it is put beyond all doubt, that *not many wise men after the flesh, and disputers of this world, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, the weak things of the world, the base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not*, 1 Cor. i. 26.—28. But yet I must observe, that in order to persons having their consciences resolved in matters," as truths

or

or errors, sins or duties, “ before the Lord, by the light of his “ word and the guidance of his Spirit ;” it is certainly necessary, as has been already hinted, that they understand something of the true meaning, nature, and tendency of these matters. If thus much be not granted, instead of true Bible-religion, I apprehend, we will be in danger of landing in the fantastic reveries of wild enthusiasm. Without such an understanding of these matters, how can persons judge of their conformity or contrariety unto the word of God, which is the alone measure and standard of truth and error, sin and duty? And if they be not persuaded in their own minds of the conformity or contrariety of these matters to said word; how come they to be satisfied about their duty of espousing and swearing to cleave unto them all the days of their lives, as truths and duties,—or to contend and testify against them, as errors and evils? That resolution of mens consciences in matters of truth and error, sin and duty, which is brought about by the *light of God’s word and the guidance of his Spirit*, is not certainly of a blind implicit nature, but is accompanied with light and knowledge: for the Holy Ghost, being a *Spirit of wisdom and revelation*, undoubtedly enlightens the mind or understanding in the knowledge of those things, wherein he *so resolves*.

Again, although some of Christ’s witnesses may not be capable of disputing certain Bible truths and duties, for which, however, through the grace of their Lord strengthening them, they may even give their bodies to be burnt, if called thereunto; yet, I suppose, they will be found in case to say as much, however confusedly and indistinctly, about the true nature of these things, and the scripture-grounds their faith and persuasion of them rest upon, as that others, who themselves understand those things, will easily perceive, that they are not making a leap in the dark, or going to death under the mere impulse of bigotted enthusiasm or blind zeal. Which, I am morally certain, is not the case with all those who take the Secession-covenant, with regard to every thing therein contained or referred to.—Further, it may be observed here, that the self-same grace of our Lord which enables his witnesses to go to death for him when called thereto, is no less sufficient, whenever he sees meet, to enable them to speak boldly for him even before rulers and judges, so as to surprise and confound their adversaries. Thus, in many instances, it has been in times past: for as he often hides these things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes; so it is easy with him, out of the mouths of these babes to perfect praise unto his own name. Remarkable to this purpose is what we have in the forecited 1 Cor. i. 27. 28. 29. In a word, if Christ’s witnesses are, for the most part, thus *weak*, or not among the most

most *knowing* and *intelligent* ; one would think, you and your brethren should be more tender on the point of distressing their weak minds with such a huge mass of disputable and intricate matters, — many of which, it is certain, cannot be duly known without a good deal of acquaintance with human histories. Pray, do not avail yourselves of their weakness, and incapacity of disputing points with you, for binding burdens upon them, which their compassionate Lord and Master never bound.

Apprehending that a difficulty or objection might be started from the uncertainty most of people in our times must be at with regard to not a few of the facts mentioned or referred to in the *Acknowledgment of sins* ; you next endeavour to anticipate or remove that. What you offer to this effect is very remarkable, and is at large as follows : — “ But further upon this particular, “ for preventing a mistake, we would notice, concerning the “ historical narration of public evils in the *Acknowledgment of sins*, — that the *Bond* doth not import a swearing unto the truth “ of this narration, or the historical truth of these facts. It “ doth not belong to religious work, but to the practice of “ courts in processes before them, — for persons to swear to the “ truth of facts : and then, they can only swear to what they “ have been eye or ear witnesses of. But when persons come “ forward to a swearing of the *Bond*, they are supposed to be “ beyond any dubiety about the truth of these facts mentioned “ in the *Acknowledgment of sins*, as being things public and no- “ tour, which cannot be reasonably called in question. Yea, “ such is the evidence of the truth of these things, that a pro- “ ceeding upon it cannot be questioned, — but at the rate of ab- “ olishing all obligation to confess and lament over the public “ grounds of the Lord’s controversy. — Those who join in the “ *Bond*, have already been making a solemn confession of these “ evils as true. And, in swearing the *Bond*, they are not swear- “ ing that these things are true ; but taking the truth of them as “ unquestionable, — they engage to testify against these and such “ other evils, according to their stations and capacities. Thus, “ it is not the truth of the facts which they offer to ascertain by “ a solemn oath ; but their own engagement to testify and con- “ tend against the same, in such ways as are competent for them, “ being evils which are sadly and notoriously taking place. We say, “ this their own engagement in the matter — is the thing ascer- “ tained by that oath.” And then you add, — “ And we may “ notice here, that after all the attacks which have been made “ upon the *judicial Testimony* and the *Acknowledgment of sins*, — “ none have ever yet pretended to point out so much as one hi- “ storical falsehood in them ; though many, even of those who “ formerly espoused the same, have evidenced a great inclination

“to do so, if it had been possible. — But the facts themselves stand unquestionable.”

Here is strange doctrine, in my view. I suppose, it has been owing to doctrine of this sort taught by you in private several years ago, (although, perhaps, not duly understood), that a certain minister of that Associate Presbytery, whereof I was a member, at an extrajudicial conference, said,—That persons, when joining in the *Bond*, have nothing to do with the historical part of the *Acknowledgment of sins*, (although the *Bond* expressly reduplicates upon it), for which he gave no less than your own authority, in a private conversation with him when a student;—that it was this which cleared his own way to join in the *Bond*; and that it is in this light he administers it unto his people. For which, he was deservedly rebuked by Mr Blyth. Here I cannot forbear saying, that it grieves me at the very heart to think, how much poor simple people are abused and imposed upon by their leaders, in this awful affair! May the Lord mercifully dispose and incline them to judge more for themselves, and give less implicit faith to their clergy!—Perhaps, every body will not be as free with you; but I shall be as plain and honest as to inform you, that I have heard some sensible, intelligent persons observe, that there are things here which would be nowise unworthy of an accomplished adept in the arts of a certain order of men, commonly known by the name of *Jesuits*. Remember, I am not affirming this myself; nor will I take upon me to determine as to the justness of that observation: for, although I have read a little about them, I am not well versed in the history of that society, and those arts of theirs which of a long time have rendered them so famous. But thus much I can safely say, that these salvos of yours did nothing toward the removal of my scruples at your mode of covenanting; but rather confirmed me more in them.

How does it appear, that a proceeding unto solemn swearing upon the evidence of the truth of all the historical affairs mentioned or referred to in the *Acknowledgment of sins*, cannot be questioned,—but at the rate of abolishing all obligation to confess and lament over the public grounds of the Lord's controversy? or, what mean you by that assertion?

Whether *reasonably* or *unreasonably*, undoubtedly some of the *facts* as stated and laid by the *Associate Presbytery* in their *Judicial Testimony* and *Acknowledgment of sins*, have been called in question and objected to; and that by men who were not reckoned altogether void either of reason or religion, and who had considerable access to get themselves informed of these matters. They were so, even by your *Burgher-brethren*; as appears from their *Overture concerning historical mistakes*, &c. And as some

of these men were among the first constituent members of the *Associate Presbytery*, had *judicially* adopted the *Testimony*, sworn the *Bond* with its reduplicating clause, and warmly preached and prayed up both; one is apt to think, they would not have taken such a step without very deliberate consideration, and weighty reasons. They were so likewise by the late Mr Currie at Kinglassie; as appears from his *Essay on separation* (which indeed I never saw; but gather thus much from the quotations from it in Mr Wilson's answer), — and his *Plain perjury and great iniquity of the Seceding brethrens new covenant, discovered*: which very accidentally came to my hand the day before yesterday; and some of the contents whereof, upon glancing them over, surprised me not a little. If ever you or any of your brethren gave it an answer, I never happened to see it. Speaking of the *confession of sins*, that author says, “It is not true;” and of the *covenant* itself, he says, “It is a *false covenant*,” which he tries to prove by instances. And I might also mention the late Mr Willison of Dundee, who, in his *Testimony*, specifies several things in those papers, which he says are not matters of fact. Sure, then, these men “pretended to point out historical false-hoods” or mistakes: whether they succeeded therein or not, is another question. I also remember to have heard intelligent persons allege in conversation, that sundry things are not candidly and fairly related by the *Associate Presbytery*; but much stretched and aggravated. But whether such objections and allegations be well founded, or not; truly I cannot with certainty say: for I never particularly examined, nor closely thought of these matters in this point of view. Nor indeed do I now mean to enter into such historical disquisitions. These shall be left unto such as have more leisure and opportunities for them, than I can attain to.

But, in your great depth of penetration and sagacity, you have fallen upon a device, hitherto undiscovered by those of your way, for bearing people out in taking the covenant, whether the things mentioned in the *Acknowledgment of sins* be *facts* or not; and for encouraging them to proceed in that solemn work, without ever giving themselves the least trouble of inquiring into the authenticity of those things, or the evidence upon which they are founded. This certainly is a rare discovery. I know not, if the *Synod* have yet formally voted you their thanks, for that good service you have done their cause. Hitherto I thought you had been alone in *this doctrine*; but I find your dear friend Mr Morison, in his *Attempt*, &c. p. 119. * entirely

* Mr Morison's words are: “As a great part of the *Confession* [of sins prefixed to the *Bond*] consists of a narration of matters of fact,
“ of

tiely agrees with you therein; though, perhaps, that particu'ar part of his sermon received certain touches of your masterly pen. And, if I mistake not, Mr Brown of Haddington, who is on the Burgher-side of the question, has adopted much the same notion: at least, he apologizes for the original framers of the Seceders covenant upon that principle; and would have us to believe that that was their view of the matter. *Historical account of the Seceders*, p. 59. *

Thus,

“ of which we have no knowledge but by history; some may be ready
 “ to object, How can we ratify such an acknowledgment by solemn
 “ oath? To which we answer, That we have the highest moral cer-
 “ tainty for the truth of these facts; and therefore concluding them to
 “ be true, we swear to contend and testify against the evils thus histori-
 “ cally related. So it is not the truth of the above-mentioned history,
 “ that we swear to; but the evils narrated in said history, that we swear
 “ against.” But what moral certainty can one have of these matters,
 who knows no more about them than reading them in the Acknow-
 ledgment of sins? No man can be said to have the highest moral cer-
 tainty for the truth of any past transaction, without examining the hi-
 storical evidence for it; and I believe few of the covenanters have either
 time or means for such an inquiry: and therefore their concluding them
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of these men were among the first constituent members of the *Associate Presbytery*, had *judicially* adopted the *Testimony*, sworn the *Bond* with its reduplicating clause, and warmly preached and prayed up both; one is apt to think, they would not have taken such a step without very deliberate consideration, and weighty reasons. They were so likewise by the late Mr *Currie* at *Kinglassie*; as appears from his *Essay on separation* (which indeed I never saw; but gather thus much from the quotations from it in Mr *Wilson's* answer), — and his *Plain perjury and great iniquity of the Seceding brethrens new covenant, discovered*: which very accidentally came to my hand the day before yesterday; and some of the contents whereof, upon glancing them over, surprised me not a little. If ever you or any of your brethren gave it an answer, I never happened to see it. Speaking of the *confession of sins*, that author says, “It is not true;” and of the *covenant* itself, he says, “It is a *false covenant* :” which he tries to prove by instances. And I might also mention the late Mr *Willison* of *Dundee*, who, in his *Testimony*, specifies several things in those papers, which he says are not matters of fact. Sure, then, these men “pretended to point out historical falsehoods” or mistakes: whether they succeeded therein or not, is another question. I also remember to have heard intelligent persons allege in conversation, that sundry things are not candidly and fairly related by the *Associate Presbytery*; but much stretched and aggravated. But whether such objections and allegations be well founded, or not; truly I cannot with certainty say: for I never particularly examined, nor closely thought of these matters in this point of view. Nor indeed do I now mean to enter into such historical disquisitions. These shall be left unto such as have more leisure and opportunities for them, than I can attain to.

But, in your great depth of penetration and sagacity, you have fallen upon a device, hitherto undiscovered by those of your way, for bearing people out in taking the covenant, whether the things mentioned in the *Acknowledgment of sins* be *facts* or not; and for encouraging them to proceed in that solemn work, without ever giving themselves the least trouble of inquiring into the authenticity of those things, or the evidence upon which they are founded. This certainly is a rare discovery. I know not, if the *Synod* have yet formally voted you their thanks, for that good service you have done their cause. Hitherto I thought you had been alone in *this doctrine*; but I find your dear friend Mr *Morison*, in his *Attempt, &c.* p. 119. * entirely

* Mr *Morison's* words are: “As a great part of the *Confession* [of “sins prefixed to the *Bond*] consists of a narration of matters of fact,
“ of

tirely agrees with you therein; though, perhaps, that particular part of his sermon received certain touches of your masterly pen. And, if I mistake not, Mr Brown of Haddington, who is on the Burgher-side of the question, has adopted much the same notion: at least, he apologizes for the original framers of the Seceders covenant upon that principle; and would have us to believe that that was their view of the matter. *Historical account of the Seceders*, p. 59. *

Thus,

“ of which we have no knowledge but by history; some may be ready
 “ to object, How can we ratify such an acknowledgment by solemn
 “ oath? To which we answer, That we have the highest moral cer-
 “ tainty for the truth of these facts; and therefore concluding them to
 “ be true, we swear to contend and testify against the evils thus histori-
 “ cally related. So it is not the truth of the above-mentioned history,
 “ that we swear to; but the evils narrated in said history, that we swear
 “ against.” But what moral certainty can one have of these matters,
 who knows no more about them than reading them in the Acknow-
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Thus, it seems, you and your Burgher-brethren, whatever irreconcilable feuds still subsist between you about the meaning of the words of a religious clause in some burghers-oaths, unite your whole strength in the defence and support of the *common cause* of the Secession. With regard to the latter, however, I cannot but express my surprise at two things; wherein, I know, I have the good fortune of being like minded with yourself. (1.) That they should pretend to be still holding the *judicial Testimony* composed and emitted by the *Associate Presbytery*, after that not only you and your Antiburgher-brethren, upon whom, by the mere dint of a *protest*, the whole powers and privileges of the *Associate Synod* devolved, *judicially* found and declared, that they had dropt and fallen from the *whole testimony*; but also, they themselves had published to the world, that said *Testimony* is stuffed with *falsehoods* or *mistakes*. (2.) That they should make such a noise, both from the pulpit and the press, about the binding obligation of the *covenants*, and its being a *moral duty* to swear or renew them; and yet never do so themselves. Strange! inculcate it upon their people, as a *moral duty*; and yet keep them living and dying in the *neglect* of it! This some cannot help looking upon as a *mere blind* to poor unthinking people. I have heard some of their clergy attempt to vindicate their conduct thus: We could have no freedom, say they, to renew the *covenants* in the present *Bond and Acknowledgment of sins*, composed by the *Associate Presbytery*; and to proceed to that work in *another manner*, would widen the difference between them and their *Antiburgher-brethren*. But I shall submit it to the impartial of whatever denomination, if this reason be

“ledge of and certainty for what they solemnly confessed to God, lest their work should partly amount unto a hypocritical slander.”—— I shall add, especially as the greater part of the things confessed are omissions and commissions charged upon others, and not upon the covenanters themselves; whence they would need to be well certified both of the *truth* and the *evil* of these things, lest they should be found false accusers of and witnesses against these others; and that unto the all-seeing and impartial JEHOVAH, who cannot be imposed upon, and with whom there is no respect of persons.——Once more, when giving the reasons for his Burgher brethrens not proceeding in covenanting, he expresses himself thus: “Finding, that, besides some few inadvertent expressions, the Confession of sins published in 1744, and now used by their Antiburgher-brethren, is such as they could scarce hope to make the twentieth part of their hearers understand; and exceedingly stumbled at the manner in which this work is managed by their brethren, they have hitherto been afraid to proceed therein.”

p. 75.

Some of these hints are certainly very just; some others of them one would scarce have expected from a Professor of Divinity.

of

of sufficient weight for bearing them out in the *habitual neglect* of an *important moral duty*.

"The Bond" reduplicating upon the Acknowledgment of sins, "doth not," say you, "import a swearing to the truth of this *narration*" (contained in said *Acknowledgment*); "or the *historical truth* of these *facts* :—in swearing the *Bond*, they are "not swearing that these things are *true*."—Pray, what then does it import? It is strange, if an oath expressly reduplicating upon a huge mass of historical transactions, related as facts or things which certainly took place, does not import a swearing that they are so; that is, things which had a real existence. If I, for instance, swear an oath reduplicating upon the following proposition,—*"Though the above gross and dangerous errors"* (enumerated in the preceding paragraph) — *"were brought before the judicatories of this church; and likewise, though the teacher of them owned and maintained them in his defences at their bar; yet the general assembly, in the year 1717, dismissed the process without any censure inflicted upon the said teacher,"*—*Act for renewing the covenants, p. 104.*—Does not my swearing that oath import a swearing, that the errors there referred unto were really brought before the judicatories of this church; — that the teacher of these errors really owned and maintained them in his defences at the bar of said judicatories; — and that, nevertheless, the general assembly, in the year 1717, really dismissed the process without any censure inflicted upon the said teacher? Or, if my oath reduplicates upon this proposition,—*"Likewise, the superstitious observation of holidays is introduced among us, by the vacation of our most considerable courts of justice in the latter end of December,"*—*ib. p. 103.* : — does not that import a swearing, that there really is a vacation of said courts at the time mentioned; and that thereby the superstitious observation of *holidays* is really introduced among us? And so on of other such like instances. But if the *Bond* does not import such a swearing; to what purpose are there so many facts specified, and reduplicated upon in it? — It is certainly an indispensably-necessary requisite of swearing, that it be done *in truth*. Now, would not this seem to import, not only that the things about which the oath is interposed are true in themselves; but also that the person taking the oath is persuaded of the truth of them, yea, and even in the very act of swearing considers them *as true*?—"It doth not," say you, "belong to religious work," (by which, I suppose, you mean, the swearing of oaths and covenants about religion), "but to the practice of courts in processes before them, — for persons to swear to the truth of facts." But, sure, as little does it belong to *religious work*, to swear *truths*

truths and *falsehoods* indifferently ; or swear to contend against a great number of things, without any the least respect had to them as *facts*, or whether ever such things had an *existence*. Does it belong to *religious work*, to swear an oath reduplicating upon a great many things related as *standing grounds of the Lord's controversy with a nation or people* ; while, at the same time, it is none of the swearer's business or concern, at least in the act of swearing, whether these things be *true* or *false*, — or whether any such things ever had a *being* ? I wish, Sir, you may not at length become an advocate for a species of *swearing*, under the specious pretence of *religious work*, which no *civil courts* or *judges*, who fear God the *supreme Judge*, and duly regard the welfare of human society, would give the least countenance unto “ in processes before them.” — Ay but, say you, what the bond imports this way, is, “ a swearing to testify against these “ and such other evils. Thus, it is not the truth of the facts “ which they offer to ascertain by a solemn oath ; but their own “ engagement to testify and contend against the same.” Here truly you go very nicely to work, in *distinguishing* ; more so, it is acknowledged, than I well understand ; and much more so than I would incline, especially in such an awful matter as an oath. I earnestly wish simple people may be on their guard against such sophistry and subtle niceties, in matters of so great importance. — It is not easy to see, how you come thus to distinguish between the *evils* and the *facts* ; or between the things reduplicated upon in the Bond, as *evils*, and as *facts*.

When we speak of an *evil* or *sinful action* ; do we not suppose, the *action* and the *evil* to be inseparable ? Can there be an *evil* or transgression (I speak of actual sin), without an *action* ? Or, may we, in an abstract way, conceive of *evils* and *transgressions*, without at the same time conceiving of *facts* or *actions*, wherein the evil consists, and from which it is inseparable ; inasmuch that, if these had not taken place, this had never been ? No, surely : for sin is not a mere creature of the imagination. What we call sins of commission certainly lie in some actions or other, either of the inward or outward man, which the law of God forbids to be done. So that we cannot separate the idea of such *evil* from *action* or *fact*. For instance, Adam's first sin, or actual transgression, which lay in eating the forbidden fruit : the eating of that fruit was a *fact* or *action* ; and sure, without that *fact* or *action*, that *evil* had never subsisted. Hence, when we confess that sin of our first parents, we do not merely lament over the *sinfulness* in an abstract view, but acknowledge the *sinful action* or *fact* itself ; or in other words, that they did really eat that fruit, and that their so doing was a violation of the divine law. Or, if we should swear to testify against their eating
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that fruit, as an *evil*; does not our so swearing also import an assertion or acknowledgment of the *truth* of the fact, or that they really did eat that fruit? And this will apply to other things, as well as that *. When we solemnly swear to contend

* For further clearing what is above said, and preventing mistakes, or objections, it may here be noticed, (1.) That even *heart-sins* themselves lie in acts or actions, viz. of the inner man; although they should not break out in the conversation, so as to become *overt acts*, or actions of the outward man. The systematical writers cannot be set in battle-array against me here: for Turretine himself, who is of great repute among Seceding clergymen, (save only, that some of them find fault with him for giving too little power unto the magistrate in matters of conscience or mere religion), teaches thus:—" *Peccatum actuale est aberratio a lege Dei in actibus internis et externis,*" &c. That is, *Actual sin* is a wandering or straying from the law of God, in *acts* both *internal* and *external*. " *Patratur vel corde per cogitationes et desideria illicita,*" &c. That is, It is committed either in the *heart* by thoughts and unlawful desires.—" *Actuale dicitur, non tam quod actu existat, quia hoc non minus peccato originali competit, quam quod sit in actionibus, non in habitu.*" That is, It is called *actual*, not so much because it actually exists, for this no less belongs to original sin,—as because it lies in actions, not in the habit. Part first of his large system, page 710. (2.) But it is the *outward* and *overt acts* of actual sin that are chiefly respected in what is above said; the *evils* related in the historical part of the *Acknowledgment of sins*, and reduplicated upon in the *Bond*, being plainly things of that nature; that is *outward* and *overt acts*, which are declared to be sinful,—for instance, the *toleration-act*.—True indeed, there are sins of omission, or omissions, which are declared to be sinful, there related and reduplicated upon; such as, the revolution-parliament's neglecting and passing by the laws and statutes enacted in favour of the covenanted uniformity in the period between 1638 and 1650, their not repealing the act rescissory, &c. But even as to omissions of that kind; can the evil be separated from facts, or historical truth? If one neglects the duty of prayer, or alms-deeds according to his ability, he is guilty of a sinful omission; he leaves undone, what God requires to be done: but can you separate the *evil* here from the *fact* or *truth* of his neglecting prayer, or alms-deeds? Or, in the instance already mentioned;—can the *evil* of passing by the foresaid laws, and not repealing the foresaid act, be separated from the *historical truth* of the revolution-parliament's not having revived the former, nor repealed the latter? (3.) I acknowledge the systematical writers distinguish between sin in the *concrete* or *materially*, as including the *matter* of the sinful *action* itself, and sin in the *abstract* or *formally*, as signifying only the *vitiosity* or *depravity* of the action; which indeed may help us to *think with the greater accuracy and precision on that subject*. But did they ever mean to carry that distinction so far, as that persons might swear to contend against the *abstract*, without regard had to the *concrete*; or against things as *evils*, without regarding them as *facts*? I suppose, not.

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and testify against a great number of things, whether of more ancient or later date, as *evils*; does not that at the same time imply an assertion or acknowledgment of these very things as *facts*, as things which really did, or still do exist? I am not well versed in metaphysical distinctions and niceties; but the very nature of the thing somehow makes me so to think. But you seem to think otherwise. For, if I am not mistaken, what you teach here is,—That an oath reduplicating upon a narrative of things as *facts*, or things which *really happened*, does not import a swearing to the truth of these facts,—an assertion or acknowledgment of their having ever taken place; but only, a confession of the sinfulness of such things, on the supposition of their having taken place, and an engagement to contend and testify against them as *evils*. No matter, whether the things ever existed, or not: the swearer is quite safe in lamenting over, and engaging to testify against them, under the notion of *evils*, without regard to their *authenticity*, or considering them as *facts* at all. But this is doctrine which as yet I am not able to receive: for, at this rate, I think, men might safely swear to a *mere blank* *. Pray, consider—who requireth such swearing at our hand?

“Those who join in the Bond,” say you, “have already been making a solemn confession of these evils as true.” This they do in the reading of the *Acknowledgment of sins* †, wherein they are all supposed to join in a way of “solemn confession,” previous to their formally entering into, or swearing the *bond*: for that *acknowledgment* is evidently not only a lamentation over the things therein related as *evils*, but also an assertion or declaration of them as *true*,—as *facts* which actually took place; as is clear from the obvious strain and tenor thereof. And then,

* Were this sort of doctrine to be admitted, people might enter into oaths and covenants to contend and testify against mere chimeras of their own brain. In the reveries and workings of imagination, they might figure out to themselves a great number of evils, and bind themselves with a solemn oath to contend against them,—without ever considering whether they have the least foundation in *fact* or not; whether they ever existed any where else but in their own brain. And would not that be offering a solemn affront to the *Most High*?

† Here it may be observed, that, besides the solemn confession of these evils at the renovation of the covenants, they are made matter of confession and grounds of humiliation, among the Seceders, on all their days of fasting, which are very frequent: for, in all their acts for public fasts, after particularly mentioning some of those things, there is an express reference made unto the *judicial Testimony*, and *Acknowledgment of sins prefixed to the Bond*. In all these acts, the historical matters in these papers are mentioned as real matters of fact, and as standing grounds of the Lord’s controversy with the present generation.

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the Bond expressly reduplicates upon said assertion or declaration of facts, in these words,—“ We shall, according to our several stations, places, and callings, contend and testify against the other evils named in the above confession of sins.” Now, does not this look very like, as if the covenanters sealed that solemn confession they had been making of these evils as *true*, with their oath? or, as if their very act of swearing imported an assertion or acknowledgment of these things as *true* or certain *facts*, as well as an engagement to testify against them as *evils*? This I shall submit unto the intelligent and impartial.

But, to take up the matter in another point of view: Suppose, it should for once be granted, that the *Bond* does not import a direct swearing unto the *truth of the facts*, but only to contend and testify against them as *evils*; I do not see how even that would much help your cause. For certainly a swearing of the *Bond in truth and judgment*, necessarily supposes, that all the things mentioned in the *Acknowledgment of sins* are certain *facts*; and not only so, but that the covenanters are thoroughly *persuaded* thereof in their own minds. I suppose, you will not risk your reputation so far, as in express words to refuse this. This is plainly taught in the before-cited passage of the *Confession of Faith*, — “ Whosoever taketh an oath ought — therein to avouch nothing, but what he is *fully persuaded is the truth*.” And, indeed, who that truly fear the Lord, and are duly impressed with the weight and awful solemnity of an oath, would swear about things, or contend against them as *evils*, without being *fully persuaded*, that such things ever were?—Now, here, I would ask,—What are we to understand by this *persuasion of the historical truth* of these things, necessarily supposed or implied in a *judicious* swearing to contend against them as *evils*; and how is it to be obtained? You say, that persons joining in the *Bond*, “ take the truth of these things as unquestionable.” But do you mean, a mere taking of the truth of these things for granted, in

* As I take this matter to be of greater importance than some may be aware, for setting it in as clear a light as I can, I would yet further ask,—If the *evils* related in the *Confession of sins*, as brought into the *Bond* itself by the reduplicating clause, are not to be understood in the *concrete*, as signifying *evil actions or deeds*? And consequently,—If the *bond* itself, with said clause, does not take up and consider them as certain *facts, facts, or transactions* which really took place agreeable to the narrative reduplicated upon; and which, being supposed to have been sinful, are engaged to be contended and testified against? The affirmative of this is the truth of the matter. How then can it possibly be, that the *Bond* does not import a swearing the truth of the facts; but only an engagement to testify against them as *evils*, without regarding them as *facts*?

a *blind implicit manner*, without ever concerning themselves with their being *facts*, or the evidence of their being so? The things, you say, are “public and notour.” But thus much is certain, that the far greater part of them took place before most of the swearers were born. How then are they *notorious*, or well known to them? If they do not make an inquiry into them for themselves, they must certainly interpose an oath about them upon mere hearsay or report. And I doubt much, if this be consistent with swearing *in truth and judgment*. But is not the fore-said *persuasion* rather to be understood of a rational sort of conviction, arising from a diligent examination of what historical evidence there is for the truth of those things?—It is not denied, but readily admitted, that “persons may have their consciences “resolved in matters” of scripture truth and duty “before the “Lord, by the light of his word and the guidance of his Spirit, “—without being versed in the controversies about the same.” This resolution, however, as was before hinted, is not of a blind, implicit nature; but carries along with it the strongest evidence, even such as amounts to a demonstration; so that the force of it cannot be resisted. For, in thus resolving the conscience, God carries home his word, *in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*, 1 Cor. ii. 4.; *not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*, 1 Thess. i. 5. But it doth not appear, that there is ground to expect any such resolution of conscience with regard to the historical truth of facts, which depend upon human testimony, or the knowledge whereof is to be derived from human histories, only: for the means by which the Holy Spirit worketh upon the minds of men, in a way of conviction and persuasion, is not a human, but a divine testimony. And, sure, no such testimony is to be found concerning the historical truth of those things related in the *Acknowledgment of sins*. A persuasion of this sort, therefore, would seem to be attainable only, in a way of carefully perusing the histories which treat of those things, and judging therefrom for ourselves as to the historical evidence of the truth of them. Whence it would not seem to be enough, that the things themselves really be facts, yea, or even that there is abundant historical evidence of their being so; but the swearers would need to see this with their own eyes, or to be persuaded hereof in their minds from their own personal acquaintance with that historical evidence. In a word, in swearing about past transactions, the swearer’s oath would seem to import or denote his faith and persuasion of the several things which it respects, founded on such evidence as not only satisfies his own mind, but such as he can with freedom appeal to the *omniscient One* he has been at pains to acquire or find out by a diligent search.

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But, sure, you must know, the far greater part of Seceders have neither leisure nor opportunity for inquiring into the historical evidence of the truth of those things which the Bond reduplicates upon. This is a fact which, in the very nature of the thing, will not admit of dispute: it is absolutely beyond controversy. And indeed, I suppose, they never in the least concern themselves with these things as *facts*, nor so much as once think of examining the historical evidence of their being so; but just take all this way upon trust, or for granted in a blind implicit manner. They may either be or not be facts, for aught they know. Nay, some who are most zealous for the present *mode of covenanting*, have freely owned to me, that they know not whether the things related be facts or not; but the footing they go upon is,—if such things really did take place, they were wrong. And, to the same purpose, a gentleman of my acquaintance, who has been a good deal conversant with Seceders, lately informed me, that, “from conversation with different people, he learns, the people do not trouble themselves much as to the truth of the narrative; but take it for granted, saying, if there is any mistake therein, it lies at the ministers door, who framed and imposed the oath: nay, that some have owned to him, they had no business with the historical narrative prefixed to the Bond, whether it contained truths or falsehoods: but that they could safely swear it, upon considering them as evils, whether they were founded on facts or not.” But do you really believe yourself, that this way of going to work is a swearing *in truth and judgment*? Nay, is it not the highest instance of swearing in the most blind and implicit manner?

And indeed, although people had ever so much time to search into the historical evidence of the truth of that prolix narrative; considering how partially and unfairly historians do often relate things, and how much they will differ among themselves in their account of the same things, I cannot but think it extremely hard to lay the Christian people under a necessity of interposing a solemn oath about such a huge mass of things, the knowledge and evidence of the truth whereof are to be gathered from human histories, from the relations and writings of fallible and uninspired men only. Where is the necessity for this? May not all the knowledge that is necessary for them as *Christians* be attained unto, without perusing and labouring hard in volumes of human histories, records of *parliament*, acts and proceedings of *general assemblies*? &c. I wish such a task be not calculated for leading off people's attention from *the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus*. If we consider the matter but just in this point of view, it will, perhaps, be difficult, if not altogether impossible, to pro-

duce a precedent or example every way parallel to the mode of covenanting or religious swearing which presently obtains in the Secession, from any history sacred or profane.

Upon the whole: I think, it ought to be matter of serious consideration with you, if your doctrine in this sermon has not a native tendency to promote and encourage rash, ignorant, and implicit swearing; which cannot fail to be of very dangerous consequences, with regard to both *church* and *state*. For my friends and brethren's sake,—for the sake of such a multitude of precious souls as are embarked in the Secession-cause, I cannot but earnestly entreat and beseech you, a chief man among those of that way, closely and impartially to think of this momentous matter. Far be it from me to say, that you had any such design in the preaching and publishing of this sermon. But, as you are skilful in *metaphysics*, you cannot miss to remember the well-known distinction of *finis operis* and *finis operantis*, that is, the end of the work, and the end of the worker: According to which, what I have just now hinted, may be the end or native tendency of the doctrine of the sermon, although it should not have been the end, design, or intention of the author; yea, through inviolable attachment to a particular scheme, wherein both interest and honour are deeply concerned, and party-zeal, he might be so far blinded, as not to discern any such tendency in his doctrine.

Some people, and, I fear, not without too good ground, complain, that *rash and unnecessary swearing* too much obtains in the *civil state*, or with regard to the *civil* affairs of Great Britain at this day. This complaint, if it be just, would certainly deserve the attention and consideration of the *public*, nay, the *legislature* itself, even in a *civil and political view*: for since an oath is, as it were, the great bond and ligament of human society, and that which is to them an *end of all strife*; undoubtedly it belongs to the secular magistrate, for the temporal good and welfare of the *civil community*, to guard their subjects against every thing which tends to wear off impressions of the weight and awful solemnity of an oath. But how deplorable will it be, if those who are ordained preachers, to teach the Gentiles in faith and verity, should, directly or indirectly, give any the least countenance unto such a practice;—if they should begin, both from the pulpit and the press, to teach doctrine calculated for promoting *rash, implicit, and unnecessary swearing* among the people; and that too, under the pretence of *religious work*, nay, an indispensably-necessary part of religious work? Sure, that would be far from doing any real service unto either *religious* or *civil work*; unto either the *church of the living God*, or the *worldly kingdom* they belong to.

I am sensible, it is now more than time to leave you to your own meditations. And therefore I bid you *farewell*.

F I N I S.



Lately published, written by the same Author,

A N
A C C O U N T
O F

The Rise, Grounds, and Progress of the late Difference
between the ANTIBURGHER-SECEDERS, and
ANDREW SCOTT Minister of the Gospel at Dundee.

In a Letter to a Gentleman in Edinburgh.

To which are annexed,

A PROTEST by the said ANDREW SCOTT, and MICHAEL ARTHUR Minister of the Gospel at Dumbarrow, against the Associate Presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline's proceeding to suspend them from the Exercise of their Ministry, for refusing to withdraw their Papers of Difficulties given in to that Presbytery, relative to the Mode of Covenanting practised among those of that way,—without using Scripture-methods for the removal of these their Difficulties.

A LETTER to that Presbytery concerning the Process while in dependence before them; and,

A serious ADDRESS to the CHRISTIAN PEOPLE of the SECESSION, beseeching them to examine, by the rule of God's word, the various articles of their peculiar testimony, especially as these are bound upon them by their leaders with a solemn Oath,—the most intricate and hard to be understood, perhaps, that ever was imposed upon any Christian people,

Thou shalt swear,—in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness. Jer. iv. 2.

Him that is weak in the faith, receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. Rom. xiv. 1.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God. 1 John iv. 1.

Search the scriptures. John v. 39.

Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? Gal. iv. 16.

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Chapman, John.

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